

SACRED HISTORY,
SELECTED FROM
THE SCRIPTURES;
WITH
ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS,
PARTICULARLY CALCULATED
TO FACILITATE THE STUDY
OF THE
HOLY SCRIPTURES
IN
SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES.

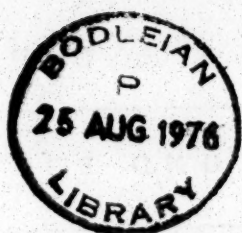
SECOND EDITION.

V O L. IV.

BY MRS. TRIMMER.

GLOCESTER:
PRINTED BY R. RAIKES;
FOR T. LONGMAN, G. G. J. AND J. ROBINSON,
PATER-NOSTER-ROW;
AND J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

M.DCC.LXXXVIII.



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E R R A T A

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- P. 17, note, before *Mattherw*, put *, and after *i*. add 23.
34, note, after *x*. add 5.
40, running title, for *Jofiah's*, read *Isaiah's*.
56, line 5, for *could*, read *would*.
77, line 20, after *they*, add *may*.
100, note, for 17. 18. read *xvii*. 18.
113, line 4, for *corruption*, read *corruptions*.
170, for *Seff. LXIX*. read *Seff. XLIX*.
219, put * before the note;—and for *i*. 1. read *i*. 17.
257, at the bottom of the page, for *Seff.* read *Anno*.
343, note, after *Section*, add 88.
367, title, after *pride*, put —; and before *erefteth*, insert *He*.

S E C T. I.

JONAH SENT AGAIN TO NINEVEH.

AND the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the second time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee.

So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city of three days journey.

And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes.

And he caused it to be proclaimed, and published through Nineveh, by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing; let them not feed, nor drink water.

But let man and beast be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every

one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands.

Who can tell if GOD will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

And GOD saw their works that they turned from their evil way: and GOD repented of the evil that he would do unto them, and he did it not.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry.

And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious GOD, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil.

Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it is better for me to die than to live.

Then said the LORD, Doest thou well to be angry?

So Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city.

And the LORD GOD prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head to deliver him from his grief. So Jonah was exceedingly glad of the gourd.

But

But GOD prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered.

And it came to pass when the sun did arise, that GOD prepared a vehement east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah that he fainted, and wished in himself to die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

And GOD said to Jonah, Dost thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry, even unto death.

Then said the LORD, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow: which came up in a night, and perished in a night:

And should not I spare Nineveh that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons, that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand, and also much cattle?

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The behaviour of the Ninevites was, on this occasion, exemplary in the highest degree; and it is mentioned by our Saviour himself in the New Testament, to the reproach of Israel. We may learn from the happy effects of it, that public fasting and humiliation for national sin, are well pleasing to the LORD: not that he delights in the affliction of his creatures, any farther than as it conduces to their reformation, and renders them objects of his mercy and loving-kindness.

Though the LORD was in a peculiar manner the GOD of *Israel*, he did not utterly forsake the rest of the world; the wonders which he wrought for his own people were done *openly*. In the wars with *Israel*, the heathens frequently heard the prophets, and were eye-witnesses of many miracles; but they hardened their hearts against conviction: notwithstanding this (we have reason to think) they were not brought to utter destruction without *particular* warnings, of which we read many instances.

It appears from Jonah's anger, that he was more solicitous for his own reputation, than for the honour of the LORD. This part of his conduct deserves censure. His history teaches us to reflect on the omnipresence of GOD, and to say with the Royal Psalmist, *Whither shall we go from thy spirit? or whither shall we flee from thy presence? If we ascend up into heaven, thou art there; if we go down to the place of the dead, thou art there also. If we take the wings of the morning, and remain in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead us, and thy right hand shall hold us!*

S E C T. II.

THE REIGN OF MENAHEM, KING OF ISRAEL.

THEN Menahem smote Tipfah, and all that were therein, and the coasts thereof to Tirzah; because they opened not unto him.

In the nine and thirtieth year of Azariah king of Judah, began Menahem the son of Gadi to reign over *Israel*.

And

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

And Pul the king of Assyria came against the land: and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver, that his hand might be with him, to confirm the kingdom in his hand.

And Menahem exacted the money of Israel, even of all the mighty men of wealth, of each man fifty shekels of silver, to give to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria turned back, and stayed not there in the land.

And Menahem reigned ten years in Samaria, and he slept with his fathers: and Pekaiah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Menahem was a monster of barbarity; his ambition would endure no opposition, as his miserable subjects experienced to their sorrow!

TIRZAH, which is frequently mentioned in Scripture, was, for a long time the *regal* city of the kingdom of Israel. Jeroboam, who was the first king of Israel after the division of the tribes, (though he dwelt for some time at Shechem) resided there, in his latter days at least, as did all the other kings of Israel, until Omri, having reigned six years in Tirzah, built Samaria, and removed the royal seat thither, where it continued till a final period was put to the kingdom. Tipfah, where Manahem exercised so much cruelty, is supposed to have been a town near to Tirzah.

S U P P L E M E N T.

As we shall, in the ensuing history, read a good deal about the Assyrians, it will be proper, before we proceed, to give a short account of the origin of the second Assyrian monarchy. PUL, the king mentioned in this section, appears (according to scripture)* to have been the founder of it; and we have reason to conjecture, that he was raised up to great power in the same manner as Hazael, king of Syria had been, that he might be instrumental to the punishment of the Israelites, for their abominable idolatry and profaneness. For we do not read in sacred history, of any king of Assyria till this period; and it had been foretold by the prophet Amos, in particular, above twenty years before, that GOD *would RAISE up a nation that should humble the house of Israel*, at that time elated with their success against Damascus and Hamath; but what nation, he names not; from which we may imply, that it did not then subsist, because we find, that succeeding prophets frequently mention the Assyrians. PUL is supposed to have reigned at Nineveh, and to have been either that king to whom Jonah preached, or, most likely, his son. What particular conquests he gained we are not told; but there is reason to think, that he either vanquished or received voluntary homage from Syria, and other nations as well as from Israel. Perhaps he was rendered eminent, and permitted to molest Israel as a reward for his repentance, and that of the Ninevites.

S E C T. III.

THE REIGN OF PEKIAH, KING OF ISRAEL.

IN the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekiah the son of Menahem began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned two years. And

And did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

But Pekah the son of Ramaliah, a captain of his conspired against him, and smote him in Samaria, in the palace of the king's house, with Argob, and Arieih, and with him fifty men of the Gileadites: and he killed him, and reigned in his room.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

There is no occasion to comment on the reign of Pekahiah; for what has been remarked of former kings, whose characters and fate resembled his, may be applied to him.

S E C T. IV.

THE REIGN OF PEKAH, KING OF ISRAEL.

IN the two and fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah, Pekah the son of Remaliah began to reign over Israel in Samaria, and reigned twenty years.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

In the days of Pekah king of Israel came Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and took Ijon, and Abel-bethmaachah, and Janoah, and Kedesh, and Hazor, and Gilead, and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali, and carried them captive to Assyria.

And Hoshea the son of Elah, made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and smote him, and slew him, and reigned in his stead.

In the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah, when Pekah had reigned twenty years,

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Pekah's reign is rendered remarkable by the captivity of the tribe of Naphtali, and a considerable part of the kingdom of Israel.

The new monarchy of the Assyrians gained ground under the government of TIGLATH-PILESER, who is supposed to have been the son and successor of PUL.

It is to be remarked, that HOSHEA did not begin his reign till several years after he had murdered Pekah,

S E C T. V.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF HOSEA.

WHEN I would have healed Israel, then the iniquity of Ephraim was discovered, and the wickedness of Samaria: for they commit falsehood; and the thief cometh in, and the troop of robbers spoileth without.

And they consider not in their hearts, that I remember all their wickedness: now their own doings have beset them about; they are before my face.

They

They make the king glad with their wickedness, and the princes with their lies.

Ephraim also is like a filly dove without heart: they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.

When they shall go, I will spread my net upon them; I will bring them down as the fowls of the heaven: I will chastise them as their congregation hath heard.

Woe unto them! for they have fled from me: destruction unto them! because they have transgressed against me: though I have redeemed them, yet they spoken lies against me.

And they have not cried unto me with their heart when they howled upon their beds: they assemble themselves for corn and wine, and they rebel against me.

Though I have bound and strengthened their arms, yet do they imagine mischief against me.

They return, but not to the most high: they are like a deceitful bow: their princes shall fall by the sword for the rage of their tongue. This shall be their derision in the land of Egypt.

Thy calf, O Samaria, hath cast thee off; mine anger is kindled against them: how long will it be ere they attain to innocency?

For from Israel was it also; the workman made it: therefore it is not God: but the calf of Samaria shall be broken in pieces.

For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind : it hath not stalk : the bud shall yield no meal : if so be it yield, the strangers shall swallow it up.

Israel is swallowed up : now shall they be among the Gentiles as a vessel wherein is no pleasure.

For they are gone up to Assyria, a wild ass alone by himself : Ephraim hath hired lovers.

Yea, though they have hired among the nations, now will I gather them, and they shall sorrow a little for the burden of the king of princes.

Because Ephraim hath made many altars to sin, altars shall be upon him to sin.

I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.

They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, and eat it ; but the LORD accepteth him not ; now will he remember their iniquity, and visit their sins ; they shall return to Egypt.

For Israel hath forgotten his maker, and buildeth temples ; and Judah hath multiplied fenced cities : but I will send a fire upon his cities, and it shall devour the palaces thereof.

They shall not dwell in the LORD's land ; but Ephraim shall return to Egypt, and they shall eat unclean things in Assyria.

My GOD will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him : and they shall be wanderers among the nations.

For now they shall say, We have no king, because

we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us?

O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.

Take with you words, and turn to the LORD, say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips.

Asshur shall not save us: we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in thee the fatherless findeth mercy.

I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him.

I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.

His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell was Lebanon.

They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree: from me is thy fruit found.

Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the LORD are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By these extracts from Hosea, who prophesied in the reigns of the kings whose history has just been related, we may per-

ceive why the LORD resolved to bring judgments on the land of Israel.

From the beginning of this section we find, that they were warned not to go down to Egypt and Assyria for help: and that the *great offence* of the Israelites was worshipping idols, the golden calf in particular.—The punishment threatened for these crimes, appears perfectly just and proper for those, who had forsaken their MAKER.

In the latter part of this section, the prophet calls on the people to repent and return to the LORD, and furnishes them with a prayer, very suitable to their necessities; and then, in the name of their all-merciful GOD, promises blessings to those who should be truly penitent. The reformation of Israel from idolatry is foretold, and their consequent prosperity, under the emblem of a green flourishing fig-tree.

The prophet concludes by saying, that whosoever is wise and prudent, shall understand these things. That is to say, all those who are truly religious, and desirous of knowing the ways of the LORD. Such persons (as the Psalmist says) *will observe these things*. * He will meditate on the mercies and judgments of GOD, that he may learn how to obtain the one, and to escape the other.

* Psalm cvii. 43.

S E C T. VI.

THE REIGN OF JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH.

IN the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel, began Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah to reign.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD: he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.

How-

Howbeit, the high places were not removed: the people sacrificed and burned incense still on the high places. He built the higher gate of the house of the LORD, and the wall of Ophel.

Moreover, he built cities in the mountains of Judah, and in the forests he built castles and towers.

He fought also with the king of the Ammonites, and prevailed against them. And the children of Ammon gave him the same year an hundred talents of silver, and ten thousand measures of wheat, and ten thousand of barley. So much did the children of Ammon pay unto him, both the second and third: So Jotham became mighty, because he prepared his ways before the LORD his GOD.

(In those days the LORD began to send against Judah Rezin the king of Syria, and Pekah the son of Remaliah.)

Now the rest of the acts of Jotham, and all his wars, and his ways, lo, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

He was five and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

And Jotham slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David. And Ahaz his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jotham being a pious good prince, was blessed with a prosperous and honourable reign; he gained some considerable advantages;

advantages; repaired and beautified the Temple, and at length died in peace, Pekah, king of Israel, having entered into a league with Rezin, king of Syria, made an attempt against Judah, but was not suffered to prevail; for his adversary, Tiglath-Pilefar, diverted his attention to his own kingdom, by invading the land of Naphtali, as we lately read.

S E C T. VII.

THE REIGN OF AHAZ KING OF JUDAH.

IN the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah, Ahaz the son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign.

And it was told the house of David, saying, Syria is confederate with Ephraim. And his heart was moved, and the heart of his people, as the trees of the wood are moved with the wind.

Then said the LORD unto Isaiah, Go forth now to meet Ahaz, thou, and Shear-jashub thy son at the end of the conduit of the upper pool in the high way of the fuller's field:

And say unto him, Take heed, and be quiet; fear not, neither be faint-hearted for the two tails of the smoking fire-brands, for the fierce anger of Rezin with Syria, and of the son of Remaliah:

Because Syria, Ephraim, and the son of Remaliah have taken evil counsel against thee, saying, Let us go up against Judah and vex it, and let us make a breach therein

therein for us, and set a king in the midst of it, even the son of Tabeal;

Thus saith the LORD GOD, It shall not stand, neither shall it come to pass.

For the head of Syria is Damascus, and the head of Damascus is Rezin: and within threescore and five years shall Ephraim be broken, that it be not a people.

And the head of Ephraim is Samaria, and the head of Samaria is Remaliah's son. If ye will not believe, surely ye shall not be established.

Moreover, the LORD spake again unto Ahaz, saying, Ask thee a sign of the LORD thy GOD, ask it either in the depth or in the height above.

But Ahaz said, I will not ask, neither will I tempt the LORD.

And he said, Hear ye now, O house of David; Is it a small thing for you to weary men, but will ye weary my GOD also?

Therefore the LORD himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Emmanuel.

Butter and honey shall he eat, that he may know to refuse the evil, and choose the good: for before the child shall know to refuse the evil, and choose the good, the land that thou abhorrest shall be forsaken of both her kings.

The LORD shall bring upon thee and upon thy people, and upon thy father's house, days that have
not

not come, from the day that Ephraim departed from Judah, even the king of Assyria.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the LORD shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria.

And they shall come, and shall rest all of them in the desolate valleys, and in the holes of the rocks, and upon all thorns, and upon all bushes.

In the same day shall the LORD shave with a razor, that is hired, namely, by them beyond the river, by the king of Assyria, the head, and the hair of the feet: and it shall also consume the beard.

The LORD spake to me also again, saying,

Forasmuch as this people refuseth the waters of Shiloah that go softly, and rejoice in Rezin, and Remaliah's son; Now therefore, behold, the LORD bringeth up upon them the waters of the river, strong and many, even the king of Assyria, and all his glory: and he shall come up over all his channels, and go over all his banks:

And he shall pass through Judah; he shall overflow and go over, he shall reach even to the neck: and the stretching out of his wings shall fill the breadth of thy land, O Emmanuel.

Associate yourselves, O ye people, and ye shall be broken in pieces: and give ear, all ye of far countries; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces; gird yourselves, and ye shall be broken in pieces.

Take

Take counsel together and it shall come to nought: speak the word, and it shall not stand; for God is with us.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

No king ever had greater incitements to obedience, than Ahab had, or more opportunities of doing good; for at the time of his accession to the throne, his kingdom was in a very flourishing state, and the true religion established. We have reason to think, that he had a good education, as well as good example from his father; besides these advantages, Ahaz was particularly encouraged to fear and serve the LORD, by the gracious message sent to him at the beginning of his reign by the prophet Isaiah, when he dreaded the united forces of Israel and Syria.

After the prophet Isaiah had assured Ahaz that the enemies he dreaded should not prevail against him, in order to convince this king that the final end of the Jewish state, was not so near as he apprehended; and at the same time to give a remarkable prophecy to the world; the LORD (by the mouth of his prophet, as we may suppose) desired Ahaz to ask for a sign, though ever so difficult, and it should be granted. But Ahaz, whether out of respect, or despondency and unbelief, refusing to ask for a sign, the prophet assured him from the LORD, that before that time came, Emmanuel (or God with us) that is to say, the promised SAVIOUR * should be born, in a miraculous manner; and the kingdom of Ephraim and Assyria destroyed.

The prophet also foretold the future desolation of the land of Israel and Judah by the kings of Egypt and Assyria.

Matthew i.

The

The king of Assyria is here stiled the *hired razor*. This is a parabolical expression, signifying, that the LORD would employ this monarch as his instrument, to punish the Jews, and allow him to take the spoil of the country as wages for his service. The *head*, *feet*, and *beard*, imply the different ranks of people, from the highest to the lowest, that composed the nation. These God threatened to cut off by the hand of the king of Assyria. And the kings of Judah and Israel are warned, that their forming confederacies and alliances with other nations would be to no purpose.

S E C T. VIII.

WICKEDNESS OF AHAZ—NUMBERS SLAIN.

BUT Ahaz did not that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.

For he walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, and made also molten images for Baalim.

Moreover, he burned incense in the valley of the son of Hinnom, and burned his children in the fire, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.

He sacrificed also and burned incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

Wherefore the LORD his GOD delivered him into the hand of the king of Syria: and they smote him, and carried away a great multitude of them captives, and brought them to Damascus. And he was also delivered into the hand of the king of Israel, who smote him with a great slaughter.

For

For Pekah the son of Remaliah slew in Judah an hundred and twenty thousand in one day, which were all valiant men; because they had forsaken the LORD GOD of their fathers.

And Zichri a mighty man of Ephraim slew Maa-seiah the king's son, and Azrikam the governor of the house, and Elkanah that was next to the king.

And the children of Israel carried away captive of their brethren two hundred thousand women, sons and daughters, and took also away much spoil from them, and brought the spoil to Samaria.

But a prophet of the LORD was there, whose name was Oded: and he went out before the host that came to Samaria, and said unto them, Behold, because the LORD GOD of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered them into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage, that reacheth up unto heaven.

And now ye purpose to keep under the children of Judah and Jerusalem for bondmen and bond-women unto you: but are there not with you, even with you, sins against the LORD your GOD?

Now hear me therefore, and deliver the captives again, which ye have taken captive of your brethren: for the fierce wrath of the LORD is upon you.

Then certain of the heads of the children of Ephraim, Azariah the son of Johanan, Berechiah the son of Meshillemoth, and Jehizkiah the son of Shallum, and Amasa the son of Hadlai, stood up against them that came from the war.

And

And said unto them, Ye shall not bring in the captives hither: for whereas we have offended against the LORD already, ye intend to add more to our sins and to our trespasss: for our trespass is great, and there is fierce wrath against Israel.

So the armed men left the captives and the spoil, before the princes and all the congregation.

And the men which were expressed by name rose up, and took the captives, and with the spoil clothed all that were naked among them, and arrayed them, and shod them, and gave them to eat and to drink, and anointed them, and carried all the feeble of them upon asses, and brought them to Jericho the city of palm-trees, to their brethren: then they returned to Samaria.

At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drove the Jews from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is needless to comment on the wickedness of Ahaz, as the enormity of his guilt is so apparent; but we may observe, that it was greatly aggravated by his inattention to the goodness of the LORD, in sending his prophet to him. Pekah, king of Israel, was very inveterate against Judah; and there is no knowing to what extremities he would have proceeded, if he had not been restrained by a prophet.

It is shocking to read of wars between those who were so nearly allied, and who sprang from the same stock. From the prophets reproof to the Israelites of Samaria, we may learn,
that

that when unhappy animosities prevail among those who are properly *one people*, all cruelty and oppression should be avoided by the victors. They should call to mind, that the conquered are brethren, and on no account keep them in captivity, or delight in destroying their country. The method which the heads of Ephraim took, in administering to the necessities of the unfortunate prisoners, was truly noble and worthy of imitation.

S E C T. IX.

IMPIETY OF AHAZ—HIS DEATH.

AT that time did king Ahaz send unto the kings of Assyria to help him.

For again the Edomites had come and smitten Judah, and carried away captives.

The Philistines also had invaded the cities of the low country, and of the south of Judah, and had taken Beth-shemesh, and Ajalon, and Gederath, and Shocho with the villages thereof, Timnah with the villages thereof, Gimzo also and the villages thereof: and they dwelt there.

For the LORD brought Judah low, because of Ahaz king of Israel: for he made Judah naked, and transgressed sore against the LORD.

So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria, saying, I am thy servant and thy son: come up, and save me out of the hand of the king of Syria, and out of the hand of the king of Israel, which rise up against me.

And

And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house, and sent it for a present to the king of Assyria.

And the king of Assyria hearkened unto him: for the king of Assyria went up against Damascus, and took it, and carried the people of it captive to Kir, and slew Rezin.

And Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria came unto him, and distressed him, but strengthened him not.

For Ahaz took away a portion out of the house of the LORD, and out of the house of the king, and of the princes, and gave it unto the king of Assyria: but he helped him not.

And king Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw an altar that was at Damascus: and king Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the fashion of the altar, and the pattern of it, according to all the workmanship thereof.

And Urijah the priest built an altar according to all that king Ahaz had sent from Damascus: so Urijah the priest made it against king Ahaz came from Damascus.

And when the king was come from Damascus, the king saw the altar: and the king approached to the altar, and offered thereon.

And he burned his burnt-offering and his meat-offering, and poured his drink-offering, and sprinkled the blood of his peace-offerings upon the altar.

And

And he brought also the brazen altar which was before the LORD, from the fore-front of the house, from between the altar and the house of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the altar.

And king Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt-offering, and the evening meat-offering; and the king's burnt-sacrifice, and his meat-offering; with the burnt-offering of all the people of the land, and their meat-offering, and their drink-offerings; and sprinkle upon it all the blood of the burnt-offering, and all the blood of the sacrifice: and the brazen altar shall be for me to enquire by.

Thus did Urijah the priest, according to all that king Ahaz commanded.

And king Ahaz cut off the borders of the bases, and removed the laver from off them; and took down the sea from off the brazen oxen that were under it, and put it upon a pavement of stones.

And the covert for the sabbath that they had built in the house, and the king's entry without, turned he from the house of the LORD, for the king of Assyria.

And in the time of his distress did he trespass yet more against the LORD: this is that king Ahaz.

For he sacrificed unto the gods of Damascus which smote him: and he said, Because the gods of the kings of Syria help them, therefore will I sacrifice to them, that they may help me. But they were the ruin of him and of all Israel.

And

And Ahaz gathered together the vessels of the house of GOD, and cut in pieces the vessels of the house of GOD, and shut up the doors of the house of the LORD, and he made him altars in every corner of Jerusalem.

And in every several city of Judah he made high places to burn incense unto other gods, and provoked to anger the LORD GOD of his fathers.

And Ahaz reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and he slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the city, even in Jerusalem: but they brought him not into the sepulchres of the kings of Israel. And Hezekiah his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is evident that Ahaz either forgot, or paid no regard to the threatenings of the prophet, that the king of Assyria should be *a hired razor* to cut off the house of Israel and Judah. For when he found himself oppressed by enemies on every side, instead of applying to the LORD for relief, he put himself under subjection to this very monarch, and endeavoured to hire his friendship with those treasures, which were appropriated to the LORD. His impious views were however defeated; for Tiglath-Pileser, instead of assisting Ahaz, *came up and distressed him, but strengthened him not.* It is supposed that he turned his whole force against Syria, and that, after killing Rezin the king of Damascus, he seized on that place, which was the capital city, and put an end to the kingdom of Syria.

What

What shocking impieties did Ahaz commit. That of removing the altar was a presumptuous breach of the Divine law ; and his paying adoration to the gods of Syria, was an open act of rebellion against the KING OF KINGS.

Ahaz had a very unquiet reign. What death he died, is not mentioned ; but it is evident, that his memory was abhorred by his subjects, for he was not allowed an honourable burial in the sepulchres of the kings of Israel ; but interred like a private person.

S E C T. X.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

NOW it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah began to reign.

Hezekiah began to reign when he was five and twenty years old.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father had done.

He removed the high places, and brake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made ; for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it ; and he called it Nehushtan.

He, in the first year of his reign, in the first month, opened the doors of the house of the LORD, and repaired them.

And he brought in the priests and the Levites, and gathered them together into the east street, And said unto them, Hear me ye Levites, sanctify now yourselves, and sanctify the house of the LORD GOD of your fathers, and carry forth the filthiness out of the holy place.

For our fathers have trespassed, and done that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD our GOD, and have forsaken him, and have turned away their faces from the habitation of the LORD, and turned their backs:

Also they have shut up the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and have not burned incense, nor offered burnt-offerings in the holy place, unto the GOD of Israel.

Wherefore the wrath of the LORD was upon Judah and Jerusalem, and he hath delivered them to trouble, to astonishment, and to hissing, as ye see with your eyes.

For lo, our fathers have fallen by the sword, and our sons, and our daughters, and our wives are in captivity for this.

Now it is in mine heart to make a covenant with the LORD GOD of Israel, that his fierce wrath may turn away from us.

My sons, be not now negligent: for the Lord hath chosen you to stand before him, to serve him, and that ye should minister unto him, and burn incense.

Then the Levites arose, and gathered their brethren, and sanctified themselves, and cleansed the house of the LORD.

Then

Then they went in to Hezekiah the king, and said, We have cleansed all the house of the LORD, and the altar of burnt-offering, with all the vessels thereof, and the shew-bread table, with all the vessels thereof.

Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

Moreover, all the vessels which king Ahaz in his reign did cast away in his transgression, have we prepared and sanctified, and behold, they are before the altar of the LORD.

Then Hezekiah the king rose early, and gathered the rulers of the city, and went up to the house of the LORD.

And they offered sacrifices and burnt-offerings for all Israel, by the king's commandment.

And he set the Levites in the house of the LORD with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the king's seer, and Nathan the prophet; for so was the commandment of the LORD by his prophets.

And the Levites stood with the instruments of David, and the priests with the trumpets.

And Hezekiah commanded to offer the burnt offering upon the altar. And when the burnt-offering began, the song of the LORD began also with the trumpets, and with the instruments ordained by David king of Israel.

And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt-offering was finished. So the service of the house was set in order.

And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves and worshipped.

And Hezekiah rejoiced, and all the people that God had prepared the people: for the thing was done suddenly.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The good HEZEKIAH had been an associate with his father in the last year of his reign, and, without doubt, had beheld with great concern, the neglect of GOD's worship, but could not begin the reformation of the kingdom, during the life of Ahaz; however, as soon as he came to full possession of the throne, he made it the first object of his care, and pursued it with unremitting diligence.

Hezekiah was very sensible that the miseries which had fallen on the land of Judah, were the just punishment for their wickedness, and the consequence of their breach of the COVENANT which the LORD had on his part so punctually performed: he was therefore very solicitous to renew the covenant, knowing that the LORD had promised he would turn to his people whenever they sought him with a perfect heart, and forsook the sins which had rendered them abominable in his sight. The speech which the good king made to the priests and Levites, needs no explanation, and it had the intended effect; for the house of the LORD was soon cleansed from every defilement, all things removed, that had been unlawfully introduced,

ced, and every thing restored, that had been impiously set aside by Ahaz. When the king knew that the Temple was ready for divine service, he joyfully assembled the people at an early hour, and all the congregation joined with him, in humble and devout adoration of the LORD JEHOVAH.

The people of Israel had even made the brazen serpent, which Moses erected in the wilderness, an object of adoration; Hezekiah therefore thought it necessary to destroy it.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Hezekiah * next resolved to keep the passover, and willing to extend his benevolence to the whole race of Jacob, sent to all the tribes, to give them notice of his intention; and though the land of Israel was in general immersed in idolatry, there were still some who gladly obeyed the summons, and assisted at the solemnity.

That the feast of unleavened bread might be enjoyed by the poor as well as the rich, Hezekiah himself made ample provision for it by his liberality, and every heart rejoiced in the hopes of God's returning favour; their repentance found a gracious reception at the throne of mercy, and *the blessing of the LORD was again restored to his people.*

So there was great joy in Jerusalem: for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.

Then the priests the Levites arose, and blessed the people: and their voice was heard, and their prayer came up to his holy dwelling-place, even unto heaven.

These religious exercises had a proper effect on the minds of the Israelites, and they proceeded to destroy all the monuments of idolatry that remained. Hezekiah took care to renew the

* See 2 Chron. ch. xxx.

service of the Temple according to the original institution of it, and to provide for the maintenance of the priests and Levites. Judah was once more in an honourable and prosperous condition, and had every encouragement to be faithful to the LORD.

S E C T. XI.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

ADDRESSED TO THE KINGDOM OF ISRAEL.

WOE to the rebellious children, saith the LORD, that take counsel, but not of me; and that cover with a covering, but not of my spirit, that they may add sin to sin:

That walk to go down into Egypt, and have not asked at my mouth; to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!

Therefore shall the strength of Pharaoh be your shame, and the trust in the shadow of Egypt your confusion.

For his princes were at Zoan, and his ambassadors came to Hanes.

They were all ashamed of a people that could not profit them, nor be an help nor profit, but a shame, and also a reproach.

Now the Egyptians are men, and not GOD; and their horses flesh, and not spirit. When the LORD shall stretch out his hand, both he that helpeth shall fall,

fall, and he that is holpen shall fall down, and they all shall fail together.

For the Egyptians shall help in vain, and to no purpose: therefore have I cried concerning this, their strength is to sit still.

Now go, write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever:

That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD:

Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things. *prophesy deceits:*

Get you out of the way, turn aside out of the path, cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us.

Wherefore thus saith the Holy One of Israel, Because ye despise this word, and trust in oppression and perverseness, and stay thereon:

Therefore this iniquity shall be to you as a breach ready to fall, swelling out in a high wall, whose breaking cometh suddenly at an instant.

And he shall break it as the breaking of the potter's vessel, that is broken in pieces; he shall not spare, so that there shall not be found in the bursting of it a sherd to take fire from the hearth, or to take water withal out of the pit.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest shall ye be saved in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not.

But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee: and we will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was certainly foreknown to the LORD, that the Israelites would endeavour to form an alliance against the Assyrians, with the king of Egypt, and therefore he graciously warned them not to take a measure so improper for those to pursue, who, as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, might with confidence have sought Divine aid, if they would have repented and turned unto the LORD their GOD.—The consequences that would follow their acting otherwise, are here strongly pointed out; and the offences for which the LORD resolved to desert them, and leave them as a prey to their enemies, are particularly enumerated.

S E C T. XII.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF HOSHEA KING OF ISRAEL.

AND Hoshea still reigned over Israel: against him came up Shalmanezar king of Assyria, and Hoshea became his servant, and gave him presents.

And the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea: for he had sent messengers to So king of Egypt, and brought no present to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year: therefore the king of Assyria shut him up, and bound him in prison.

Then

Then the king of Assyria came up throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria, and besieged it three years.

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.

Because they obeyed not the voice of the LORD their God, but transgressed his covenant, and all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded, and would not hear them, nor do them.

For they served idols, whereof the LORD had said unto them, Ye shall not do this thing.

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments, and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their necks, like to the neck of their fathers, that did not believe in the LORD their God.

Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Judah only.

So was Israel carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After the death of Tiglath-pilefar, Shalmanezar succeeded to the throne of Assyria, who obliged Hoshea to become tributary to him. So, king of Egypt, was originally an Ethiopian, but had lately invaded Egypt, and having taken the king of that country prisoner, caused him to be burnt alive, and then seizing his kingdom, reigned there in his stead. He soon became powerful, and Hoshea, king of Israel, notwithstanding the warnings of Isaiah, entered into a confederacy with him, hoping, by his assistance, to free himself from Assyrian bondage; and in consequence of this, he withdrew his subjection from Shalmanezar, and would pay him no more tribute; and on this account it was, that the king of Assyria invaded Samaria. The people of Israel had so repeatedly rebelled against the LORD, and were become so incorrigibly wicked, that he deserted them, and they were left a prey to the Assyrians as they had been threatened.

Had the Israelites repented like the Ninevites, there is no doubt but that they also would have been saved from destruction. The LORD would have restrained the fierce wrath of the Assyrian king, who was, though he knew it not, the *rod of divine anger* *. But as neither kindness nor severity, could reform this rebellious nation, they were justly exposed to the consequences of their disobedience, and the "Israelitish kingdom was brought to an end, after it had stood divided from that of Judah two hundred and fifty-four years. A great number of the Israelites escaped with their lives; some into Egypt, but more into the kingdom of Judah, where they weaned themselves by degrees from their idolatries, and became subjects to Hezekiah, and his successors." It is needless to mention the various conjectures of different authors re-

* Isaiah x.

pecting the countries to which the captive Jews were transported, as it is a point of no importance to us, and impossible to be exactly ascertained.

S E C T. XIII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND Hezekiah trusted in the LORD GOD of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him.

For he clave to the LORD, and departed not from following him, but kept his commandments, which the LORD commanded Moses.

And the LORD was with him; and he prospered whithersoever he went forth, and he rebelled against the king of Assyria, and served him not.

He smote the Philistines, even unto Gaza, and the borders thereof, from the tower of the watchmen to the fenced city.

Now in the fourteenth year of king Hezekiah did Sennacherib king of Assyria come up against all the fenced cities of Judah, and took them.

And Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria to Lachish, saying, I have offended: return from me: that which thou puttest on me, I will bear. And the king of Assyria appointed unto Hezekiah king of

Judah three hundred talents of silver, and thirty talents of gold.

And Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasures of the king's house.

At that time did Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the pillars which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria.

After these things and the establishment thereof, Sennacherib king of Assyria came once more, and entered into Judah, and encamped against the fenced cities, and thought to win them for himself.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

“ It appears, that whilst the king of Assyria was employed against Samaria, Hezekiah took the opportunity of recovering what had been lost from his kingdom in his father's reign; and had such success against the Philistines in particular, that he not only regained the cities of Judah, which they had seized during the time that Pekah king of Israel, and Rezin king of Syria, distressed the land, but even dispossessed them of almost all their own country, except Gaza and Gath:” these successes encouraged Hezekiah to refuse the tribute which Ahaz, his father, had agreed to pay to the king of Assyria; who, it is thought, was diverted from his purpose of invading him at this time, by a war which he was engaged in with the king of Tyre, and died before the conclusion of it. He was succeeded by his son Sennacherib, who renewed the demand, and on Hezekiah's refusal, came against him with a very powerful army,

army, and took from him a great number of fortified cities, in so short a time, as seemed to threaten the total ruin of his whole kingdom. Hezekiah was terrified by these losses into a speedy submission, and sent an embassy acknowledging himself in fault, and promising to submit to whatever terms the conqueror should impose. Sennacherib was by these means induced to withdraw his army for the present, and to give up the cities he had taken. The penalty he inflicted amounted to 350,000*l.* of our money. This Hezekiah could not pay, without taking some of the treasures devoted to the LORD, and even stripping the temple of the ornaments which his own piety had dedicated. We may suppose, that he took this measure inconsiderately, and not presumptuously like Ahaz; but it certainly was a very wrong one for the Captain of the LORD's inheritance to have recourse to, nor did it go unchastised. The respite he had so dearly bought, lasted but a little while, for the treacherous Assyrian king, who was still at Lachish, soon after sent his army again to besiege the cities of Judah.

It was foretold in the reign of Ahaz, by the prophet Isaiah, that the Assyrian king should be the instrument of inflicting God's judgments on the people of Israel, of all ranks and denominations. We have already seen how truly this prediction was fulfilled, in respect to those of Samaria; and we now find the divine threatnings operating against those of Jerusalem. That the people might regard the Assyrian monarch, as the scourge of divine vengeance, the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to proclaim him as such.

S E C T. XIV.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF ISAIAH.

O ASSYRIAN, the rod of mine anger, and the staff in their hand is mine indignation.

I will send him against an hypocritical nation, and against the people of my wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets.

Howbeit, he meaneth not so, neither doth his heart think so: but it is in his heart to destroy, and cut off nations not a few. For he saith, Are not my princes altogether kings? Is not Calno as Carchemish; is not Hamath as Arpad? is not Samaria, as Damascus? As my hand hath found the kingdoms of the idols, and whose graven images did excel them of Jerusalem and of Samaria; Shall I not, as I have done unto Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?

Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the LORD hath performed his whole work upon mount Zion and on Jerusalem, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks.

For he saith, By the strength of my hand I have done it, and by my wisdom; for I am prudent: and I have removed the bounds of the people, and have robbed their treasures, and I have put down the inhabitants

bitants like a valiant man: And my hand hath found as a nest the riches of the people: and as one gathereth eggs that are left, have I gathered all the earth; and there was none that moved the wing, or opened the mouth, or peeped.

Shall the ax boast itself against him that heweth therewith; or shall the saw magnify itself against him that shaketh it? as if the rod should shake itself against them that lift it up, or as if the staff should lift up itself, as if it were no wood.

Therefore shall the LORD, the LORD of hosts, send among his fat ones leanness; and under his glory he shall kindle a burning like the burning of a fire.

And the light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his Holy One for a flame: and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day; And shall consume the glory of his forest, and of his fruitful field, both soul and body: and they shall be as when a standard bearer fainteth.

And the rest of the trees of his forest shall be few, that a child may write them.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the remnant of Israel, and such as are escaped of the house of Jacob shall no more again stay upon him that smote them; but shall stay upon the LORD, the Holy One of Israel in truth.

The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God.

For

For though thy people Israel be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them shall return: the consumption decreed shall overflow with righteousness.

For the LORD GOD of hosts shall make a consumption, even determined in the midst of all the land.

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD of hosts, O my people, that dwellest in Zion, be not afraid of the Assyrian: he shall smite thee with a rod, and shall lift up his staff against thee, after the manner of Egypt.

For yet a very little while, and the indignation shall cease, and mine anger in their destruction.

And the LORD of hosts shall stir up a scourge for him, according to the slaughter of Midian at the rock of Oreb: and as his rod was upon the sea, so shall he lift it up after the manner of Egypt.

And it shall come to pass in that day, that his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This part of Isaiah's prophecy is supposed to have been written after the destruction of Samaria. It was calculated to encourage the king and people of Judah to put their trust and confidence in the LORD; and to comfort those who had escaped from Samaria, and taken refuge in the kingdom of Judah, with hopes that they should be saved with the rest of GOD's faithful people, from the wrath of the proud king of Assyria.

Howe

How vain are tyrants of their power, and of their conquests; and yet, what is the mightiest of them, but the *Rod of God's anger*, and the staff of his indignation?

S E C T. XV.

HEZEKIAH'S SICKNESS.

IN those days when Sennacherib king of Assyria came and encamped against the fenced cities of Judah, and thought to win them for himself; was Hezekiah sick unto death.

And the prophet Isaiah the son of Amoz came to him, and said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Set thy house in order: for thou shalt die, and not live.

Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed unto the LORD, saying, I beseech thee O LORD, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight. And Hezekiah wept sore.

And it came to pass afore Isaiah was gone out into the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, Turn again, and tell Hezekiah the captain of my people, Thus saith the LORD, the GOD of David thy father, I have heard thy prayer, I have seen thy tears: behold, I will heal thee: on the third day thou shalt go up unto the house of the LORD.

And I will add unto thy days fifteen years: and I will deliver thee, and this city, out of the hand of the king

king of Affyria: and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

And Hezekiah said unto Ifaiah, What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the LORD the third day? And Ifaiah said, This sign shalt thou have of the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that he hath spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten degrees, or go back ten degrees?

And Hezekiah answered, It is a light thing for the shadow to go down ten degrees: nay, but let the shadow return backward ten degrees.

And Ifaiah the prophet cried unto the LORD: and he brought the shadow ten degrees backward, by which it had gone down in the dial of Ahaz.

And Ifaiah said, Take a lump of figs and lay them for a plaster; and they took and laid it on the boil, and Hezekiah recovered. And this is the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick, and was recovered of his sickness:

I said in the cutting-off of my days, I shall go to the gates of the grave: I am deprived of the residue of my years.

I said, I shall not see the LORD, even the LORD, in the land of the living: I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world.

Mine age is departed, and is removed from me as a shepherd's tent: I have cut off like a weaver my life: he will cut me off with pining sickness: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

I reckoned

I reckoned till morning, that as a lion so will he break all my bones: from day even to night wilt thou make an end of me.

Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove; mine eyes fail with looking upward: O LORD, I am oppressed; undertake for me.

What shall I say? he hath both spoken unto me, and himself hath done it: I shall go softly all my years in the bitterness of my soul.

O LORD, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit; so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live.

Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back.

For the grave cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth.

The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day: the father to the children shall make known thy truth.

The LORD was ready to save me: therefore we will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The disease with which Hezekiah was afflicted, was, as we may reasonably suppose, designed as a farther chastisement for his

his stripping the Temple, and submitting to Sennacherib; it was in its nature mortal, and above the power of human art to cure; the prophet Isaiah was sent to apprise him of his danger, that he might settle his worldly affairs, and prepare his mind for the awful change which he was soon to experience.

Besides the love of life, so natural to all men, Hezekiah had many reasons to make him particularly desirous of it at that time. The Assyrian power threatened to overwhelm his kingdom, and he had as yet no son to succeed him; which was a circumstance of great affliction, as he was the last of the royal family of David. He saw ruin and desolation likely to fall on his country, and had reason to fear he was under the displeasure, of GOD, as length of days was a part of the blessing which the LORD had promised to good kings; and therefore, having these prospects before his eyes, he might well melt into tears at the thoughts of approaching death.

As king of Israel, Hezekiah might with propriety plead his adherence to the worship of the LORD, because the LORD had promised His favour on that condition. The sign which was granted to strengthen Hezekiah's faith, was of a very extraordinary nature; it is needless to give a particular description of the miracle, as it cannot be accounted for by natural means; but however astonishing the relation of it may appear, it certainly was not too difficult for the ALMIGHTY to effect.

We may understand, from Hezekiah's own reflections, (which the prophet has transmitted to us) that his piety and humility were very great. His *writing*, as it is called, affords a very lively picture of what passed in his mind.—The king appears to have been at first struck with horror and dismay, at the thoughts that his life would be cut short, and that he should not live to see the deliverance which he trusted the LORD would effect for Judah.—He dreaded the increase of pains and agonies, which were already more than nature could well

well sustain.—He found no relief; but continued to lament his present misery, and approaching dissolution.—He repeated his earnest supplication, that the LORD would grant him ease. He considered that it was the Divine will that he should be thus afflicted, and resolved to moderate the excess of his grief, and submit with patience.—A ray of Divine consolation immediately darted into his mind.—He now regarded this mortal sickness as the harbinger of life and immortality.—He considered the death of the body as the birth of the soul. He felt a happy presentiment, that he should not lie for ever in the grave.—The SPIRIT *of the* LORD whispered to *his* spirit, that Divine mercy had redeemed him from that destruction which his repeated crimes deserved, and that the punishment of his sins was remitted.—He called to mind the numberless promises which the LORD had made of everlasting blessings; and felt in his heart an ardent desire to praise the LORD for ever.—He could not think that this desire, and the hope of immortality, inherent in the mind of man, would be extinguished by death—nor could he believe, when he reflected on the capacity of the human soul, that its existence was limited to this imperfect state; he therefore concluded, that it would survive the death of the body; and that he should in a future state celebrate the praises of the LORD.—Hezekiah also appears to have had a presage, that he should have a son to succeed him.

Had the good king died at this time, there is no doubt but he would have found his hopes respecting immortality confirmed; but to shew the efficacy of prayer, to reward him as a faithful king, and to do kindness to the people of Judah, his life was prolonged.

From the prophet's advice to Hezekiah, *to set his house in order*, all persons are admonished to settle their worldly concerns before their death, for the sake of their surviving friends. We may also from the prophet's example, consider it as the duty

duty of a friend to acquaint those who are in an irrecoverable state, of their danger.—How many through a mistaken tenderness, are flattered, even to the last moments, into a belief that they *shall live, and not die!*—amused with company—nay even tempted to waste those precious moments in card-playing, which should be employed in imploring Divine mercy for their numberless offences, they launch into eternity, unprepared to meet their heavenly judge!

It is probable, that those who have led *good lives*, will at first be affected with the awful tidings, as Hezekiah was; but the consciousness of having endeavoured to perform their duty in an acceptable manner, will encourage them to have immediate recourse to prayer and meditation, which will produce a train of reflections similar to those of the good king. The sincere and humble christian will enjoy a still higher degree of consolation, than he could receive, because *life and immortality*, which were but imperfectly hoped for by the Jews, have been *brought to light by the Gospel*. So far from regretting that his days are cut short, the christian will resign his soul into the hands of his REDEEMER with joyful expectation; not merely *hoping*, but well assured, *that in love to it, his SAVIOUR has delivered it from the pit of corruption, and purchased remission for his sins*; and that he shall certainly *see the LORD in the land of the living*.

Nor will the case of the abandoned sinner be made worse by his being informed, that the hand of death is upon him.—Without *repentance* there is no *remission for sins*, and though it is dangerous to defer the work of repentance to a death bed, it affords the only chance of procuring pardon, for those who have before neglected it. Surely then it is cruelty to exclude any one from this opportunity of making their peace with their offended GOD. Divine mercy is infinite, and the example of the penitent thief on the cross, affords encouragement to hope, that sincere contrition will never supplicate in vain.

The

The only objection that can reasonably be made to the measure here recommended, is, that the agitation of mind such dreadful tidings will naturally produce, may aggravate the disease.—It should be remembered, that diseases come from God, whose mercy may humbly be expected to co-operate in such a case with the pious intentions of the friend. It may be proper also to reflect on the consternation which a soul unprepared must unavoidably experience immediately on its separation from the body; when no kind friend can administer the balm of consolation; when the day of grace is gone for ever! Great caution, however, should be used, in mentioning a circumstance which cannot fail of striking the mind, even of the best of men, with awe and apprehension.

S E C T. XVI.

HEZEKIAH'S CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD.

AND when Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was come, and that he was purposed to fight against Jerusalem: he took counsel with his princes and his mighty men, to stop the waters of the fountains which were without the city. And they did help him.

So there was gathered much people together, who stopped all the fountains, and the brook that ran through the midst of the land, saying, Why should the kings of Assyria come and find much water?

Also he strengthened himself, and built up all the wall that was broken, and raised it up to the towers, and another wall without, and repaired Millo in the city

city of David, and made darts and shields in abundance.

And he set captains of war over the people, and gathered them together to him in the street of the gate of the city, and spake comfortably to them, saying, Be strong and courageous, be not afraid nor dismayed for the king of Assyria, nor for all the multitude that is with him : for there be more with us than with him.

With him is an arm of flesh; but with us is the LORD our GOD, to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By the exhortations which the good king gave to his officers, we may understand, that his mind was full of faith and confidence in the power of the LORD.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Awakened to a proper sense of his duty, by the reflections which he had made in his illness, Hezekiah was no sooner recovered, than he made all possible preparations for a brave defence of his kingdom, he fortified Jerusalem, laid in great store of arms and provisions for the siege, and cut off, as much as possible, all supply of water from the enemy.

S E C T.

S E C T. XVII.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND the king of Affyria fent Tartan, and Rab-faris, and Rab-fhakeh from Lachifh to king Hezekiah, with a great hoft againft Jerufalem. And they went up and came to Jerufalem. And when they were come up, they came and flood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high way of the fuller's field.

And when they had called to the king, there came out to them Eliakim the fon of Hilkiah, which was over the houfhould, and Shebna the fcribe, and Joah the fon of Afaph the recorder.

And Rab-fhakeh faid unto them, Speak ye now to Hezekiah, Thus faith the great king, the king of Affyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trufteft?

Thou fayeft (but they are but vain words) I have counfel and ftrength for the war. Now on whom doft thou truft, that thou rebelleft againft me? Now, behold, thou trufteft upon the ftaff of this bruifed reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it? fo is Pharaoh king of Egypt unto all that truft on him.

But if ye fay unto me, we truft in the LORD our GOD: is not that he whose high places, and whose al-

tars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem? Now therefore, I pray thee, give pledges to my lord the king of Assyria and I will deliver thee two thousand horses, if thou be able on thy part to set riders upon them.

How then wilt thou turn away the face of one captain of the least of my master's servants, and put thy trust in Egypt for chariots and for horsemen? Am I now come up without the LORD against this place to destroy it? the LORD said to me, Go up against his land, and destroy it.

Then said Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebna, and Joah, unto Rab-shakeh, Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language; for we understand it: and talk not with us in the Jews language, in the ears of the people that are on the wall.

But Rab-shakeh said unto them, Hath my master sent me to thy master, and to thee, to speak these words? hath he not sent me to the men which sit on the wall, that they may be punished with you? Then Rab-shakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in the Jews language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand.

Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Hearken

Hearken not unto Hezekiah. For thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern: Until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vine-yards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The LORD will deliver us.

Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word. For the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems that Sennacherib, after he had laid the plan for the siege of Jerusalem, went back to Lachish, and sent three of his generals with a very great army to conduct it.

The speech, which Rab-shakch made to Hezekiah's ministers, was an open insult to the LORD GOD of Israel.

It does not appear, that Hezekiah had any intention of seeking succours from Egypt, but as the king of Israel had formed an alliance with that nation, Rab-shakeh supposed the king of Judah would do the same.

It is very remarkable, that notwithstanding Rab-shakeh affected to despise the LORD, he pretended to have been sent by Him to destroy His land. This circumstance seems to indicate, that Isaiah's prophecy, which foretold that the Assyrian power should be the scourge both of Israel and Judah, had been delivered so publickly, that Rab-shakeh had heard of it; and though he had no faith in the LORD, he might think proper to refer to the prophecy, in order to intimidate the king and people of Judah.

Rab-shakeh was a very eloquent man, and therefore Eliakim had great reason to dread the effect of his plausible arguments, especially as the people of Judah had on so many occasions been persuaded to forsake the LORD, and join with idolators; and therefore were in particular danger of being seduced at a time when such misfortunes threatened them, as they could not by human means avert: but the good example of their excellent Sovereign, and a regular attendance on public worship, had produced such happy effects on their minds, that they readily obeyed the command, which Hezekiah had previously given, and listened to the vain boastings of Rab-shakeh, with silent indignation.

S E C T. XVIII.

HEZEKIAH'S HUMILIATION—HIS PRAYER.

THEN came Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, to Hezekiah with

with their cloaths rent, and told him the words of Rab-shakeh.

And it came to pass when king Hezekiah heard it, that he rent his cloaths and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.

And he sent Eliakim, which was over the household, and Shebna the scribe, and the elders of the priests covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.

And they said, Thus saith Hezekiah, This is a day of trouble, and of rebuke, and of blasphemy.

It may be the LORD thy God will hear all the words of Rab-shakeh, whom the king of Assyria his master hath sent to reproach the living God: and will reprove the words which the LORD thy God hath heard: wherefore lift up thy prayer for the remnant that are left.

So the servants of king Hezekiah came to Isaiah.

And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say to your master, Thus saith the LORD, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me.

Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land: and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.

So Rab-shakeh returned and found the king of Assyria warring against Libnah: for he had heard that he was departed from Lachish.

And when he heard say of Tirhakah king of Ethiopia, Behold, he is come out to fight against thee: he sent messengers again unto Hezekiah, saying, Thus shall ye speak to Hezekiah king of Judah, saying, Let not thy God in whom thou trustest deceive thee, saying, Jerusalem shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria.

Behold, thou hast heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all lands, by destroying them utterly: and shalt thou be delivered? Have the gods of the nations delivered them which my fathers have destroyed; as Gozan, and Haran, and Rezeph, and the children of Eden, which were in Thelazar? Where is the king of Hamath, and the king of Arpad, and the king of the city of Sepharvaim, of Henah, and Ivah?

And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD.

And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD, and said, O LORD GOD of Israel which dwellest between the cherubims, thou art the God, even thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth; thou hast made heaven and earth.

LORD, bow down thine ear, and hear: open, LORD, thine eyes, and see: and hear the words of Sennacherib, who hath sent him to reproach the living GOD.

Of

Of a truth, LORD, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, And have cast their gods into the fire: for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore have they destroyed them.

Now therefore, O LORD our God, I beseech thee, save thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that thou art the LORD GOD, even thou only.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, shocked at the blasphemy of Rab-shakeh, and grieved for the despised and afflicted condition of Jerusalem, rent their cloaths and appeared before their sovereign as mourners.

The behaviour of Hezekiah, when he received the insulting message, was perfectly suited to the occasion, and expressive of the sorrow he felt at the indignity offered to the LORD GOD.

The answer which Isaiah returned in the name of the LORD, must have afforded great consolation to the good king; and his prediction, that Sennacherib *should bear a rumour*, and return to his own land, was soon verified; for the Assyrian monarch was informed, that the king of Ethiopia intended to make war against him, on which he departed from Lachish to defend his own country, instead of going to the siege of Jerusalem, and when Rab-shakeh came to inform him of his late proceedings, he found Sennacherib fully engaged in another war; however he wrote a haughty letter to Hezekiah, in which he repeated the message, which Rab-shakeh had before delivered.—Hezekiah justly considered this

as a presumptuous defiance of the ALMIGHTY GOD, and prayed the LORD to take the cause into his own hands, and maintain the honour of his holy name, not doubting, but that he could deliver him and his people from the power of the Assyrian king.

S E C T. XIX.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO HEZEKIAH.

THEN Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib king of Assyria I have heard.

This is the word that the LORD hath spoken concerning him: The virgin, the daughter of Zion hath despised thee, and laughed thee to scorn, the daughter of Jerusalem hath shaken her head at thee.

Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the holy One of Israel.

By thy messengers thou hast reproached the LORD, and hast said, With the multitude of my chariots I am come up to the height of the mountains, to the sides of Lebanon, and will cut down the tall cedar-trees thereof, and the choice fir-trees thereof: and I will enter into the lodgings of his borders, and into the forest of his Carmel.

I have

I have digged and drunk strange waters, and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of besieged places.

Hast thou not heard long ago how I have done it, and of ancient times that I have formed it? now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste fenced cities into ruinous heaps.

Therefore their inhabitants were of small power, they were dismayed and confounded; they were as the grass of the field, and as the green herb, as the grass on the house-tops, and as corn blasted before it be grown up.

But I know thy abode, and thy going out, and thy coming in, and thy rage against me.

Because thy rage against me and thy tumult is come up into mine ears, therefore I will put my hook in thy nose, and my bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest.

And this shall be a sign unto thee, Ye shall eat this year such things as grow of themselves, and in the second year that which springeth of the same; and in the third year sow ye and reap, and plant vineyards, and eat the fruits thereof.

And the remnant that is escaped of the house of Judah shall yet again take root downward, and bear fruit upward.

For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and they that escape out of mount Zion: the zeal of the LORD of hosts shall do this.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it.

By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the LORD:

For I will defend this city to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prayer which Hezekiah had offered up, was so perfectly agreeable to the divine will, and so suitable to his own character, as *captain of the LORD's inheritance*, that the prophet Isaiah was commissioned to comfort him immediately, with an assurance of the LORD's approbation and protection.

How awful was the message sent to the king of Assyria.—We may suppose, that it was publicly delivered, so that Rab-shakeh and the other generals, with their army, heard it. The latter part of the prediction was calculated to inspire fresh spirits into the people of Judah, who, without doubt, were in great consternation, on account of the formidable army, by which they were besieged.

SECTION XX.

THE ASSYRIANS SMITTEN.

AND it came to pass that night that the angel of the LORD went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand:
and

and when the people of Judah arose early in the morning, behold, their enemies were all dead corpses*.

So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh.

And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharazer his sons smote him with the sword: and they escaped into the land of Armenia. And Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead.

* I have taken the liberty of changing the expression here, according to the obvious meaning of the text.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The divine promises made by the mouth of Isaiah, were soon fulfilled. It seems that Sennacherib soon followed his letter, and was preparing to attack Jerusalem; but before the Assyrians could have time to commit any hostilities, the greatest part of their army was miraculously smitten. Sennacherib, terrified with this sudden overthrow, fled back to Nineveh, with the utmost precipitation, where he was soon after assassinated by two of his own sons.

From this wonderful defeat of the mighty Assyrian army, we may learn, that as the LORD *stills*, at his pleasure, *the raging of the sea, and the noise of the waves*; in like manner *he stills the raging of the people*. When the passions of men are most inflamed, and their designs just ripe for bursting into execution, often by some unexpected interposition, he calls upon the world to observe, that there is one higher than the highest upon earth, who can frustrate their devices in a moment, and command *the earth to be still before him*. Proud fleets, destined to carry destruction to neighbouring kingdoms,

may cover the ocean; He blows with his wind, and they are scattered. Mighty armies may go forth to the field in all the glory of human strength, but the issues of battle are with Him. He gives to some slight event the power of deciding the fate of nations. A thousand unseen ministers stand ready to be the instruments of his power, in humbling the pride, and checking the efforts of the wrath of man; as in the instance of haughty Sennacherib, and that boasted tempest of his wrath, which he threatened to pour on all the Jewish nation. It was allowed to prevail against the Israelites, as a punishment for their incorrigible wickedness, and was employed as an instrument of discipline and correction to the king and people of Judah, in order to produce in them proper reflections upon their duty, and their past errors; as they wisely considered it in this light, and humbled themselves before the LORD, he graciously * *restrained the remainder of Sennacherib's wrath*; and made it the mean of advancing the temporal prosperity of his faithful people, and of confirming the truth of his holy religion and his Almighty power."

"Let this history, therefore, lead us to a religious contemplation of the hand of GOD, in all the transactions of the world. Let us not censure Providence, on account of any seeming disorders and evils which at present take place: the plans of divine wisdom are too large and comprehensive to be discerned by us in all their extent; and where we see only by parts, we must frequently be at a loss in judging of the whole. *The way of GOD is in the sea, and his path in the great waters; his footsteps are not known* †. *But although thou sayest thou canst not see him, yet judgment is before him; therefore trust thou in him* †. Whatever distresses we suffer from *the wrath of man*, we have ground to believe that they befall us not in vain. Let us then study to gain the protection and favour of

* Psalm lxxvi. 10.

† Psalm lxxvii. 19. ‡ Job. xxxv. 14

the ALMIGHTY. *If he be for us, who or what can be against us? Let us pursue the measures which he has appointed for obtaining his grace, by faith, repentance, and a holy life, and we shall have no reason to be afraid of any evil tidings; our hearts will be fixed, trusting in the LORD; and we need not fear what man can do unto us *.*"

* The above reflections, with which I have adorned my page, are collected from Dr. Blair's most excellent sermon on *the Divine Government of the passions of men.*

S E C T. XXI.

THE PROPHECY OF NAHUM AGAINST THE
ENEMIES OF THE LORD.

THE burden of Nineveh: the book of the vision
of Nahum the Elkoshite.

GOD is jealous, and the LORD revengeth? the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on his adversaries, and he reserveth wrath for his enemies.

The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet.

He rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth, and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.

The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence, yea, the world, and all that dwell therein.

Who

Who can stand before his indignation; and who can abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured out like fire, and the rocks are thrown down by him.

The LORD is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble; and he knoweth them that trust in him.

But with an overrunning flood he will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue his enemies.

What do ye imagine against the LORD? he will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the second time.

For while they be folden together as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.

There is one come out of thee that imagineth evil against the LORD, a wicked counsellor.

Thus saith the LORD; Though they be quiet, and likewise many, yet thus shall they be cut down, when he shall pass through. Though I have afflicted thee, I will afflict thee no more.

For now will I break his yoke from off thee, and will burst thy bonds in sunder.

And the LORD hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.

Behold

Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace: O Judah, keep thy solemn feasts, perform thy vows: for the wicked shall no more pass through thee; he is utterly cut off.

He that dasheth in pieces is come up before thy face: keep the munition, watch the way, make thy loins strong, fortify thy power mightily.

For the LORD hath turned away the excellency of Jacob, as the excellency of Israel: for the emptiers have emptied them out, and marred their vine branches.

The shield of his mighty men is made red, the valiant men are in scarlet: the chariots shall be with flaming torches in the day of his preparation, and the fir trees shall be terribly shaken.

The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings.

He shall recount his worthies: they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared.

The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.

And Huzzab shall be led away captive, she shall be brought up, and her maids shall lead her as with the voice of doves, tabering upon their breasts.

But Nineveh is of old like a pool of water: yet they shall flee away. Stand, stand, shall they cry; but none shall look back. Take

Take ye the spoil of silver, take the spoil of gold ; for there is none end of the store and glory out of all the pleasant furniture.

She is empty, and void, and waste : and the heart melteth, and the knees smite together, and much pain is in all loins, and the faces of them all gather blackness.

Where is the dwelling of the lions, and the feeding place of the young lions, where the lion, even the old lion, walked, and the lion's whelp, and none made them afraid ?

The lion did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin.

Behold, I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will burn her chariots in the smoke, and the sword shall devour thy young lions : and I will cut off thy prey from the earth, and the voice of thy messengers shall no more be heard.

Woe to the bloody city ! it is all full of lies and robbery ; the prey departeth not.

The noise of a whip, and the noise of the rattling of the wheels, and of the prancing horses, and of the jumping chariots.

The horseman lifteth up both the bright sword and the glittering spear : and there is a multitude of slain, and a great number of carcases : and there is none end of their corpses ; and they stumble upon their corpses :

Behold

Behold I am against thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and will set thee as a grazing stock.

And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste: who will bemoan her? whence shall I seek comforters for thee?

Art thou better than populous No, that was situate among the rivers, that had the waters round about it, whose rampart was the sea, and her wall was from the sea?

Ethiopia and Egypt were her strength, and it was infinite; Put and Lubim were thy helpers.

Yet was she carried away, she went into captivity: her young children also were dashed in pieces at the top of all the streets: and they cast lots for her honourable men, and all her great men were bound in chains.

Thou also shalt be drunken: thou shalt be hid, thou also shalt seek strength because of the enemy.

All thy strong holds shall be like fig trees with the first-ripe figs: if they be shaken, they shall even fall into the mouth of the eater.

Behold, thy people in the midst of thee are women: the gates of thy land shall be set wide open unto thine enemies: the fire shall devour thy bars.

Draw

—Draw thee waters for the siege, fortify thy strong holds: go into clay, and tread the mortar, make strong the brickkiln.

There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off, it shall eat thee up like the canker worm, make thyself many as the canker worm, make thyself as many as the locusts.

Thou hast multiplied thy merchants above the stars of heaven: the canker worm spoileth and fleeth away.

Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers, which camp in the hedges in the cold day, but when the sun ariseth they flee away, and their place is not known where they are.

Thy shepherds slumber, O king of Assyria: thy nobles shall dwell in the dust: thy people is scattered upon the mountains, and no man gathereth them.

There is no healing of thy bruise; thy wound is grievous: all that hear the bruit of thee shall clap the hands over thee: for upon whom hath not thy wickedness passed continually.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The repentance of Nineveh, at the preaching of Jonah, was of short continuance; the people soon returned to their former evil ways. Other kings in succession ruled over the Assyrian empire, of which Nineveh was the capital city, and at length one of them carried his arms against the king and people of Israel, over whom he was suffered to prevail, as has been already

ready related*. Some years afterwards, Sennacherib the son of this monarch, attempted the subjection of Judah also, and was so far successful as to make that nation tributary to him; but that it might not be supposed this presumptuous king and his subjects, who joined with him, should escape with impunity, or that the LORD was an unconcerned spectator of their proceedings, the prophet Nahum was inspired to foretell the approaching miserable end of Nineveh. It is not expressly said, that Nahum had, like Jonah, a commission to go to this proud city; but it is agreeable to the usual method of providence, under this dispensation, to suppose, that the threatnings of divine vengeance were denounced in the ears of the heathen nations, before they were put in execution; and that they were afterwards recorded, to serve as lasting testimonies of divine justice.

Nahum lived in the reign of Hezekiah, about 90 years after Jonah. His prophecy in the original Hebrew is a fine poem in very sublime language; it is impossible to read even the translation of it, without emotion.

From the opening of this prophecy it is evident, that the LORD was *merciful* as well as *just* in his dealing with the heathen nations. What a picture does the prophet give of the Assyrians, what comfortable hopes does he hold out to the LORD's faithful people, and in what a lively manner does he describe the process of the siege, the inundation of the river, the capture of the place, the captivity, lamentation and flight of the inhabitants, the sacking of the wealthy city, and the consequent desolation and terror. How beautiful is the allegory that succeeds the description. Nineveh is represented as a great princess, led captive, with her maids of honour attending her, bewailing her condition, and their own, with tears and bitter lamentation. Nahum next denounced a woe

* See Section 12.

against Nineveh, for her perfidy and violence. He draws forth in array before our eyes, the number of her chariots and cavalry, points to her burnished arms, and to the great and unrelenting slaughter which she spreads around her. He ascribes to her idolatry one cause of her ignominious and unpitied fall, which he compares to the dreadful destruction of No, a famous city of Egypt: he then beautifully describes the ease, with which her strong holds should be taken, and her pusillanimity during the siege; pronounces that all her preparations, her numbers, opulence, and chieftains, would be of no avail; and that her tributaries would desert her. The whole concludes, with declaring the incurableness of her disease, and her utter destruction, and with introducing the nations she had oppressed, exulting with joy at her fall *.

* A great part of the foregoing Annotations, are copied from a very useful work lately published, to which I am glad to direct my readers, as it will greatly facilitate the study of the prophecies. It is entitled *A Summary View and Explanation of the Writings of the Prophets, &c.* by John Smith, D. D. Printed at Edinburgh, 1786.

S E C T. XXII.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND Hezekiah had exceeding much riches and honour: and he made himself treasuries for silver, and for gold, and for precious stones, and for spices, and for shields, and for all manner of pleasant jewels? Store-houses also for the increase of corn, and wine, and oil; and stalls for all manner of beasts, and cotes for flocks.

Moreover

Moreover, he provided him cities, and possessions of flocks and herds in abundance: for GOD had given him substance very much.

This same Hezekiah also stopped the upper water-course of Gihon: and brought it straight down to the west side of the city of David. And Hezekiah prospered in all his works.

But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the LORD came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.

Howbeit in the business of the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, who sent unto him to enquire of the wonder that was done in the land, GOD left him to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.

For at that time Merodach-baladan the son of Balandan king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah: for he had heard that he had been sick, and was recovered.

And Hezekiah was glad of them, and shewed them the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold, and the spices, and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures: there was nothing in his house, nor
in

in all his dominion, that Hezekiah shewed them not.

Then came Ifaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him, What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee? And Hezekiah said, They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.

Then said he, What have they seen in thine house? And Hezekiah answered, All that is in mine house have they seen: there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shewed them.

Then said Ifaiah to Hezekiah, Hear the word of the LORD of hosts.

Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt have, shall they take away; and they shall be slaves in the palace of the king of Babylon.

Then said Hezekiah to Ifaiah, Good is the word of the LORD which thou hast spoken: he said moreover, For there shall be peace and truth in my days.

And Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David. And all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death. And Manasseh his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Hezekiah, though in his general character a very good man, was not proof against such a tide of prosperity as now flowed in upon him. He gloried in his wealth and greatness, as if they had been acquired by his own abilities, forgetful of the hand of the LORD, which had wrought so wonderful a deliverance for him and his people; and therefore made an ostentatious display of the riches and strength of his kingdom, to the Babylonian ambassadors.

BABYLON is supposed to have been originally founded by Nimrod, and to have been the first kingdom in the world; but there is little said about it in scripture till the time of Hezekiah, from which some learned authors suppose, "that * if this kingdom rose to any great height after it was first founded it had sunk again as others had done, and therefore was inconsiderable at the time of the captivity of the ten tribes of Israel. It appears very probable, that the Assyrian and Babylonian kings were two branches of the same family, and that PUL, the first Assyrian conqueror, left two sons, Tiglath-pilesar and Nabonassar; to the former of whom he bequeathed the kingdom of Assyria, and the Babylonian to the latter. Tiglath-pilesar the elder, resided at Nineveh, the original seat of the empire; while Nabonassar, who was the younger brother, held his residence at Babylon. As the two kingdoms were governed by princes of the same family, it is likely that there was great harmony between them, and that the younger branch at Babylon, acknowledged a kind of superiority in, and subjection to, the elder in Nineveh; and this affinity accounts for the Assyrian king's forbearing to molest Babylon, whose situation would otherwise have attracted his first attention, when he had formed a design of extending his dominions."

* Sir Isaac Newton's Chronology—Universal History.

Of the kings that succeeded Nabonassar in Babylon, nothing is recorded in scripture till the reign of Berodach, or Mero-dach-baladan, who sent the embassy to Hezekiah. He is supposed to have had a double motive for sending; first to inform himself concerning the prodigy of the sun's retrogression, and also to express his friendly disposition towards a king, who seemed to be favoured by the idol, to whom the Babylonians paid adoration; for they worshipped the sun, and were very skilful in the science of astronomy.

The conduct of Hezekiah was highly blameable, but the dreadful message he received by the prophet, brought him to a sense of his error; and therefore, no farther punishment was inflicted, than informing him, that the Babylonians would, in a short time, not only strip his kingdom of all that was most valuable in it, but would even reduce some of his family to a state of slavery: this must doubtless have been a great mortification to Hezekiah, but it was his duty to acquiesce in the dispensations of infinite wisdom and goodness; and he comforted himself with the thoughts, *that peace and truth would remain in his days*; and doubtless depended on the promises of God repeatedly made by the prophets, that He would protect and sustain all those who served him with a perfect heart and a willing mind, even if they were reduced to a state of captivity; and the sequel shews, that his hopes were well-grounded.

In the days of Hezekiah lived the prophet MICAH. "His prophecies concerned both Israel and Judah. He reproved them for their sins, with great warmth and indignation; and for the comfort of the godly, delivered many things concerning the Messiah*," which will be noticed in a subsequent part of this history.

* Dr. Smith's Summary View.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXIII.

THE REIGN OF MANASSEH KING OF JUDAH.

MANASSEH was twelve years old when he began to reign.

And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

For he built up again the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed: and he reared up altars for Baal, and made a grove, as did Ahab king of Israel; and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them.

And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD said, in Jerusalem will I put my name.

And he built altars for all the host of heaven, in the two courts of the house of the LORD.

And he made his son pass through the fire, and observed times, and used incantments, and dealt with familiar spirits, and wizards: he wrought much wickedness in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

And he set a graven image of the grove that he had made in the house of which the LORD said to David, and to Solomon his son, In this house, and in Jerusalem.

falem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, will I put my name for ever.

Neither will I make the feet of Israel move any more out of the land which I gave to their fathers: only if they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that my servant Moses commanded them.

But they hearkened not: and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than did the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the children of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Manasseh seems to have been naturally of a vicious disposition, and most likely despised the admonitions of those to whom his father had committed the care of his education; and thought that because he was heir to the throne, he stood in no need of instruction. There were, without doubt, persons in the court ready to flatter his vices and follies, with a view to their own advancement, and the restoration of those idolatries from which Hezekiah had reformed the nation: however it was, Manasseh surpassed in wickedness all the kings of Judah who had been before him, particularly by the impious act of placing an idol in the house of the LORD.

The people were too ready to follow the bad example of their sovereign, and conspired with him to *banish*, if possible, their God out of the land. Those who continued faithful, could no longer attend divine worship in the Temple, as it was now dedicated to idols. If we consider, the conditions of the *covenant* which God had repeatedly made with his people, we must perceive the enormity of their offence.

S E C T.

S E C T. XXIV.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF MANASSEH.

AND the LORD spake by his servants the prophets, saying, Because Manasseh king of Judah hath done these abominations, and hath done wickedly above all that the Amorites did, which were before him, and hath made Judah also to sin with his idols :

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD of Israel, Behold I am bringing such evil upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whosoever heareth of it, both his ears shall tingle.

And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria, and the plummet of the house of Ahab: and I will wipe Jerusalem as a man wipeth a dish, wiping it, and turning it upside down.

And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies;

Because they have done that which was evil in my sight, and have provoked me to anger since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day.

Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; beside his sin, wherewith he made Judah to

fin, in doing that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

Wherefore the LORD brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The people would not have been punished beyond their deserts, if they had been taken from the world by a sudden judgment from heaven; but we find that the *Almighty*, in remembrance of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his faithful servant David, sent prophets repeatedly to teach them their duty, to reprove and to convert them; but they hardened their hearts, and despised his mercy, till at last he permitted the Assyrians to prevail against them.

ISAIAH in particular not only warned the *sinful* Israelites in general, of the danger they incurred by offending GOD, but delivered many predictions for the *comfort* of the *faithful*, concerning *their return from captivity*, and the *kingdom of MESSIAH*. He also foretold the judgments that would fall upon the Assyrians, Babylonians, Moabites, Ethiopians, Egyptians, Tyrians, and other heathen nations with whom the kingdoms of Israel and Judah were concerned, which were literally fulfilled, as we shall occasionally remark. It is supposed that he was put to death by Manasseh.

S E C T. XXV.

MANASSEH'S PRAYER.

AND when Manasseh was in affliction, he besought the LORD his GOD, and humbled himself greatly before the GOD of his fathers, and prayed, saying, O

O * LORD, ALMIGHTY GOD of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed: who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof:

Who hast bound the sea by the word of thy commandment: who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name:

Whom all men fear, and tremble before thy power: for the Majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening towards sinners, is insupportable:

But thy merciful promise is unmeasurable, and unsearchable: for thou art the most high LORD, of great compassion, long-suffering, very merciful, and repentest of the evils of men.

Thou, O LORD, according to thy great goodness, hast promised repentance, and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee: and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they be saved.

Thou therefore, O LORD, that art the GOD of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee, but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea.

My transgressions, O LORD, are multiplied, my transgressions are multiplied: and I am not worthy to

* Apocrypha.

behold and see the height of heaven, for the multitude of mine iniquities.

I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil before thee: I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments: I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offences.

Now therefore, I bow the knee of my heart, beseeching thee of grace: I have sinned, O LORD, I have sinned, and I acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O LORD, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities.

Be not angry with me for ever, by reserving evil for me, neither condemn me into the lower parts of the earth.

For thou art the God, even the God of them that repent: and in me thou wilt shew all thy goodness: for thou wilt save me that am unworthy, according to thy great mercy.

Therefore I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the powers of the heavens do praise thee, and thine is glory for ever and ever. Amen.

And God was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How long Manasseh continued in prison, (and by what means he regained his liberty we are not told; but may judge of the miseries he endured from his prayer.

Manasseh's penitence seems to have been very sincere, and the LORD accepted it according to the promise made in his holy name by Moses, that *if his people would return unto the LORD their GOD, with all their hearts and with all their souls; that then he would turn their captivity, and have compassion upon them, and would bring them into the land which their fathers possessed* *.

* Deuteronomy, ch. xxx. ver. 2, & sequen.

S E C T. XXVI.

CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF MANASSEH.

NOW after this Manasseh built a wall without the city of David, and compassed about Ophel, and raised it up a very great height, and put captains of war in all the fenced cities of Judah

And he took away the strange gods, and the idols out of the house of the LORD, and all the altars that he had built in the mount of the house of the LORD, and in Jerusalem, and cast them out of the city.

And he repaired the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed thereon peace-offerings, and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD God of Israel.

Nevertheless, the people did sacrifice still in the high places, yet unto the LORD their God only.

And Manasseh reigned fifty and five years, and slept with his fathers, and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son reigned in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Manasseh did all in his power to repair the mischief he had done to his kingdom by his impiety, and seems to have been pardoned for his offence, and to have been blessed with prosperity in the latter part of his reign. We have reason to suppose, that the people of Judah did not heartily concur in his endeavours for their reformation; and retained an inclination to idolatrous practices, one of which they obstinately adhered to, namely, sacrificing on high places notwithstanding the king's example and command to the contrary.

The prediction of Isaiah to Hezekiah, was soon fulfilled. It is said, that Manasseh was carried into BABYLON, by the *Assyrians* *: in order to account for this, we must have recourse to the history of the Assyrian empire.

* See 2 Kings xvii. 24, &c.

S U P P L E M E N T.

“ESSAR-HADDON, the son of Sennacherib, reigned over the Assyrian monarchy, which was falling into decay at his father's death, in consequence of his defeat at Jerusalem, and the revolt of the Medes: but it is supposed, that the kindred race of the Babylonish kings becoming extinct, or some other cause, producing an inter-reign in that kingdom; Essar-haddon laid hold of the opportunity, and united Babylon to the crown of Assyria. Grown potent by this union, he proceeded to establish his power over the more distant parts of his empire, and marched into Syria, and against the remnant of Israel and the kingdom of Judah; the two former he removed to distant lands, so that they now ceased to be nations, and in their stead introduced a supply of foreigners. He attempted to reduce Judah to the state of dependence it was in during the reign of king Ahaz, and so far succeeded as to take Manasseh, as we have read *.”

“Essar-haddon next resolved to invade Egypt and Ethiopia, which he did accordingly, and carried with him into captivity great numbers of the inhabitants; he held these kingdoms in subjection to him three years.

Thus did Essar-haddon extend his dominions, and spread, once more, the terror of the Assyrian name far and near. After a glorious reign of many years, he died † in the thirty-

* This king is called, in different parts of Scripture, *Affar-haddon*, *Sarchedon*, *Sargon*, and *Asnapper*. The famous exploit of *Judith*, in killing *Holiferne*, is placed in the days of *Manasseh*; but as it has no connection with the history of the kings of Judah, and is difficult to explain, it is omitted here: and the history of *Tobit* is passed over for the same reasons.

† *Prideaux's Connection.*

first year of Manasseh, and was succeeded by Saosduchius, called in scripture Nebuchadonofar. Essar-haddon is supposed to have been a mild and gracious prince, and particularly kind to the captive Jews, whom his father Sennacherib had treated with great cruelty, after his hasty return to Nineveh from the siege of Jerusalem."

S E C T. XXVII.

THE REIGN OF AMON KING OF JUDAH.

AMON was two and twenty years old when he began to reign.

But he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, as did Manasseh his father: for Amon sacrificed unto all the carved images which Manasseh his father had made, and served them; and humbled not himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself; but Amon trespassed more and more, and he reigned two years.

And his servants conspired against him, and slew him in his own house.

But the people of the land slew all them that had conspired against king Amon; and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his stead.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

When Manasseh was dead, and the people were no longer restrained by his authority from the worship of idols, they had

had recourse to their former abominations: and Amon, their young king, deluded as we may suppose, by some persons whose opinion he valued, encouraged their impiety, and strove to justify it by his own example. No excuse can be made for him, as we may conclude that Manasseh had instructed him in his duty, and informed him of the sad effects of his own bad conduct; therefore, he should have rejected the evil counsel of those who endeavoured to draw him aside from the true GOD: but youth are too apt to lend a willing ear to such as flatter them, and encourage their vices and follies. How much happier are those, whether kings or subjects, who contract early habits of piety, and virtue, who steadfastly resolve to serve their GOD, and promote the welfare of their fellow-creatures. Had Amon acted thus, he would have enjoyed a prosperous and honourable reign in consequence of GOD's covenant with the House of David.

S E C T. XXVIII.

THE REIGN OF JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH.

JOSIAH was eight years old when he began to reign.

And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the ways of David his father, and declined neither to the right hand nor to the left.

For in the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the GOD of David his father: and in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places, and the groves, and the carved images, and the molten images.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Josiah was very young when he came to the throne; but had an excellent disposition; and in all probability, good guardians. His wisdom and piety displayed themselves at an early age, for he was no more than twelve years old when he assumed the government, and began the reformation of his kingdom. Isaiah had been long dead, but it pleased the LORD to raise up another great prophet, as a comforter and counsellor to this good prince, and the pious part of his subjects; and as a monitor to those, who neglected their duty. Some extracts from the writings of this prophet will help to illustrate this period of sacred history.

S E C T. XXIX.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

IN the thirteenth year of the reign of Josiah, king of Judah, the WORD of the LORD came unto me Jeremiah, the son of Hilkiah, one of the priests that were in Ananeth, in the land of Benjamin, saying, Before thou wert brought into existence, I knew thee; before thou camest into the world, I sanctified thee; and ordained thee a prophet unto all nations.

Then said I, Ah, LORD GOD, behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.

But the LORD said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak.

Be

Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee, to deliver thee, saith the LORD.

Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth.

See, I have this day set thee over the nations, and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down; to build, and to plant.

Moreover, the WORD of the LORD came unto me, saying, Jeremiah, what seest thou? And I said, I see a rod of an almond tree.

Then said the LORD unto me, Thou hast well seen: for I will hasten my word to perform it.

And the WORD of the LORD came unto me the second time, saying, What seest thou? And I said, I see a seething pot, and the face thereof is toward the north.

Then the LORD said unto me, Out of the north an evil shall break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land.

For lo, I will call all the families of the kingdoms of the north, saith the LORD: and they shall come, and they shall set every one his throne at the entering of the gates of Jerusalem, and against all the walls thereof round about, and against all the cities of Judah.

And I will utter my judgments against them touching all their wickedness, who have forsaken me, and have

have burned incense unto other gods, and worshipped the works of their own hands.

Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces: lest I confound thee before them.

For behold, I have made thee this day, a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brasen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land.

And they shall fight against thee, but they shall not prevail against thee: for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee.

Moreover, the WORD of the LORD came to me, saying, Go, and cry in the ears of Jerusalem, saying, thus saith the LORD, I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown.

Israel was holiness unto the LORD, and the first fruits of his increase: all that devour him shall offend; evil shall come upon them, saith the LORD.

Hear ye the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, What iniquity have your fathers found in me that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?

Neither

Neither said they, Where is the LORD that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, that led us through the wilderness; through a land of deserts, and of pits, through a land of drought, and of the shadow of death; through a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt?

And I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof, and the goodness thereof: but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination.

The priests said not, Where is the LORD? and they that handle the law knew me not: the pastors also transgressed against me, and the prophets prophesied by Baal, and walked after things that do not profit.

Wherefore I will yet plead with you, saith the LORD, and with your children's children will I plead.

For pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing.

Hath a nation changed their gods? which are yet no gods; but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit.

Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the LORD.

For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

Is

Is Israel a servant? is he a home-born slave? why is he spoiled?

The young lions roared upon him, and yelled, and they made his land waste: his cities are burned without inhabitant.

Also the children of Noph and Tahapanes have broken the crown of thy head.

Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy GOD, when he led thee by the way.

And now what hast thou to do in the way of Egypt, to drink the waters of Sihor? or what hast thou to do in the way of Assyria, to drink the waters of the river?

Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the LORD thy GOD, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the LORD GOD of hosts.

For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill, and under every green tree thou wandereft,

Yet I had planted thee a noble vine, wholly a right seed: how then art thou turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine unto me?

For though thou wash thee with nitre, and take thee much sope, yet thine iniquity is marked before me, saith the LORD GOD.

How

How canst thou say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? see thy way in the valley, know what thou hast done: thou art a swift dromedary traversing her ways; A wild ass used to the wilderness, that snuffeth up the wind at her pleasure; in her occasion who can turn her away? all they that seek her will not weary themselves; in her mouth they shall find her.

Withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst. But thou saidst, There is no hope. No: for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go.

As the thief is ashamed when he is found: so is the house of Israel ashamed; they, their kings, their princes, and their priests, and their prophets, saying to a stock, Thou art my father; and to a stone, Thou hast brought me forth. For they have turned their back unto me, and not their face: but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us.

But where are thy gods that thou hast made thee? let them arise, if they can save thee in the time of thy trouble: for according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah.

Wherefore will ye plead with me? ye all have transgressed against me, saith the LORD.

In vain have I smitten your children; they received no correction: your own sword hath devoured your prophets, like a destroying lion.

O gene-

O generation, see ye the word of the LORD: Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?

Why gaddest thou about so much to change thy way? thou also shalt be ashamed of Egypt, as thou wast ashamed of Assyria.

Yea, thou shalt go forth from him, and thine hands upon thine head: for the LORD hath rejected thy confidences, and thou shalt not prosper in them.

Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My father, thou art the guide of my youth? Will he reserve his anger for ever? will he keep it to the end? Behold, thou hast spoken and done evil things as thou couldest.

Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, Return thou back-sliding Israel, saith the LORD, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, saith the LORD, and I will not keep anger for ever.

Only acknowledge thine iniquity that thou hast transgressed against the LORD thy God, and hast scattered thy ways to the strangers under every green tree, and ye have not obeyed my voice, saith the LORD.

Turn, O back-sliding children, saith the LORD, for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion.

And

And I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

And it shall come to pass when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the LORD, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the LORD: neither shall it come to mind; neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more.

At that time they shall call Jerusalem the Throne of the LORD: and all the nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the LORD, to Jerusalem: neither shall they walk any more after the imagination of their evil heart.

In those days the house of Judah shall walk with the house of Israel, and they shall come together out of the land of the north, to the land that I have given for an inheritance unto your fathers.

But I said, How shall I put thee among the children, and give thee a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? and I said, Thou shalt call me, My father; and shalt not turn away from me.

Surely, as a wife treacherously departeth from her husband, so have ye dealt treacherously with me, O house of Israel, saith the LORD.

A voice was heard upon the high places, weeping and supplications of the children of Israel: for they have perverted their way, and they have forgotten the LORD their God.

Return

Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings, Behold, we come unto thee; for thou art the LORD our GOD.

Truly in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills, and from the multitude of mountains: truly in the LORD our GOD is the salvation of Israel.

For shame hath devoured the labour of our fathers from our youth; their flocks, and their herds, their sons and their daughters.

We lie down in our shame, and our confusion covereth us: for we have sinned against the LORD our GOD, we and our fathers, from our youth even unto this day, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD our GOD.

If thou wilt return, O Israel, saith the LORD, return unto me: and if thou wilt put away thine abominations out of my sight, then shalt thou not remove.

And thou shalt swear, The LORD liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness: and the nations shall bless themselves in him, and in him shall they glory.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is a great proof of the fore-knowledge of GOD, that he should pre-ordain to the prophetic office, a man so proper for it as Jeremiah. When the word of the LORD came to this faithful priest, (never having felt the force of Divine energy) he doubted his own sufficiency to perform the task, which must have appeared particularly arduous, at a time
when

when iniquity was so prevalent among the people of Judah; but no sooner did he receive assurance that he should have Divine support, and be qualified for the office, than he *willingly* undertook, without further hesitation, to do the will of the LORD, in spite of all the opposition with which he was threatened.

In what beautiful and pathetic language does Jeremiah address himself to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, reminding them of the kindness of the LORD to their forefathers, and of their own transgressions; shewing them that they had neglected GOD, more than the heathens whom they despised had neglected the idols which they worshipped;—that their sins were great enough to raise astonishment in all the inhabitants of the heaven and earth.—He assured them, that the evils which had been permitted to fall on their nation, were the just punishment of their sins,—and upbraided them for making alliances with other nations,—for their inclination to idolatry,—and for their ingratitude in rebelling against the LORD GOD.—He then encouraged them by the most gracious promises of pardon.

* See Dr. Smith's Summary View of the Prophecies.

S E C T. XXX.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JOSIAH KING OF JUDAH.

AND the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest, and the priests of the second order, and the keepers of the door, to bring forth out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, and
for

for the grove, and for all the host of heaven. And he burned them without Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, and carried the ashes of them unto Beth-el.

And he put down the idolatrous priests, whom the kings of Judah had ordained to burn incense in the high places, in the cities of Judah, and in the places round about Jerusalem, them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets, and to all the host of heaven.

And he brought out the grove from the house of the LORD, without Jerusalem, unto the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and stamped it to small powder, and cast the powder thereof upon the graves of the children of the people.

And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beer-sheba, and brake down the high places of the gates that were in the entering-in of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on a man's left hand at the gate of the city.

Nevertheless, the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they did eat of the unleavened bread among their brethren.

And he defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the children of Hinnom, that no man might make
his

his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech.

And he took away the horses that the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entering in of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the suburbs, and burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

And the altars that were on the top of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, did the king beat down, and brake them down from thence, and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

And the high places that were before Jerusalem, which were on the right hand of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had builded for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Zidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of the Moabites, and for Milcom the abomination of the children of Ammon, did the king defile.

And he brake in pieces the images, and cut down the groves, and filled their places with the bones of men.

Moreover, the altar that was at Beth-el, and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, had made, both that altar and the high place he brake down, and stamped it small to powder, and burned the grove.

And as Josiah turned himself, he spied the sepulchres, that were there in the mount, and sent, and took

took the bones out of the sepulchres, and burned them upon the altar, and polluted it, according to the word of the LORD which the man of GOD proclaimed, who proclaimed these words against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said,

O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name, and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.

Then Josiah said, What title is that that I see? and the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of GOD that came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Beth-el.

And he said, Let him alone, let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.

And all the houses also of the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made to provoke the LORD to anger, Josiah took away, and did to them according to all the acts that he had done in Beth-el.

And he slew all the priests of the high places that were there, upon the altars, and burned men's bones upon them, and returned to Jerusalem.*

* 2 Chronicles, xxxiv. viii. seems to justify my placing this event, prior to the finding the Law.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is reasonable to suppose, that Josiah was actuated, not merely by his own inclinations, but also by Jeremiah's predictions, to destroy all the monuments of idolatry in his kingdom; for we read in a former section, that this good king began his work of reformation in the twelfth year of his reign; and Jeremiah informs us, that *he* was called to the prophetic office in the thirteenth. No sooner did Josiah testify his zeal, than the LORD encouraged him to persevere.

Josiah had an undoubted right to destroy the monuments of idolatry in the land of Israel, as well as Judah; for after the captivity of the ten tribes, all who escaped put themselves under the protection, and were united with the subjects of the king of Judah; who, as the descendant of David, was their lawful sovereign. Besides, it is imagined that the kings of Assyria, who conquered the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, did, at the time of Manasseh's restoration, confer upon the kings of Judah, who perhaps paid them homage on this account, a sovereignty over all the land of Canaan.

How greatly must it have astonished Josiah, to find, that the very action he was then performing, had been foretold many years before! This circumstance was a farther confirmation to him, that he was doing his duty.—How wonderful are the ways of Providence!

S E C T. XXXI.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JOSIAH KING
OF JUDAH.

NOW in the eighteenth year of his reign, when Josiah had purged the land, and the house, he sent Shaphan the son of Azaliah, and Maaseiah the governor of the city, and Joah the son of Joahaz the recorder, to repair the house of the LORD his GOD.

And when they came to Hilkiah the high priest, they delivered the money that was brought into the house of GOD, which the Levites that kept the doors, had gathered of the hand of Manasseh and Ephraim, and of all the remnant of Israel, and of all Judah, and Benjamin, and they returned to Jerusalem.

And they put it in the hand of the workmen, that had the oversight of the house of the LORD, and they gave it to the workmen that wrought in the house of the LORD, to repair and mend the house :

Even to the artificers and builders gave they it, to buy hewn stone, and timber for couplings, and to floor the houses, which the kings of Judah had destroyed.

And the men did the work faithfully : and the overseers of them were Jahath, and Obadiah, the Levites, of the sons of Merari ; and Zechariah, and Meshallum, of the sons of the Kohathites, to set it forward ;

forward; and other of the Levites, all that could skill of instruments of musick.

Also they were over the bearers of burdens, and were overseers of all that wrought the work in any manner of service: and of the Levites there were scribes, and officers, and porters.

And when they brought out the money that was brought into the house of the LORD, Hilkiah the priest found a book of the law of the LORD, given by Moses.

And Hilkiah answered and said to Shaphan the scribe, I have found the book of the Law in the house of the LORD. And Hilkiah delivered the book to Shaphan.

And Shaphan carried the book to the king, and brought the king word back again, saying, All that was committed to thy servants, they do it.

And they have gathered together the money that was found in the house of the LORD, and have delivered it into the hand of the overseers, and to the hand of the workmen.

Then Shaphan the scribe told the king, saying, Hilkiah the priest hath given me a book. And Shaphan read it before the king.

And it came to pass when the king had heard the words of the Law, that he rent his clothes.

And the king commanded Hilkiah, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Abdon the son of Micah, and Shaphan the scribe, and Afaiah a servant of the

king's, saying, Go, enquire of the LORD for me, and for them that are left in Israel and in Judah, concerning the words of the book that is found: for great is the wrath of the LORD that is poured out upon us, because our fathers have not kept the word of the LORD, to do after all that is written in this book.

And Hilkiah, and they that the king had appointed, went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvath, the son of Hasrath, keeper of the wardrobe. Now she dwelt in Jerusalem in the college. And they spake to her to that effect.

And she answered them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Tell ye the man that sent you to me.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, and upon the inhabitants thereof, even all the curses that are written in the book which they have read before the king of Judah.

Because they have forsaken me, and have burned incense unto other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the works of their hands: therefore my wrath shall be poured out upon this place, and shall not be quenched.

And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to enquire of the LORD, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard:

Because thine heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God when thou heardest his

words



words against this place, and against the inhabitants thereof, and humblest thyself before me, and didst rend thy clothes, and weep before me: I have even heard thee also, saith the LORD.

Behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace, neither shall thine eyes see all the evil that I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same. So they brought the king word again.

Then the king sent and gathered together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem.

And the king went up into the house of the LORD, and all the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests, and the Levites, and all the people great and small: and he read in their ears all the words of the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the LORD.

And the king stood in his place, and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies and his statutes, with all his heart and with all his soul to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.

And he caused all that were present in Jerusalem and Benjamin to stand to it. And the inhabitants of Jerusalem did according to the covenant of God, the God of their fathers.

And Josiah took away all the abominations out of all the countries that pertained to the children of Is-

rael, and made all that were present in Israel to serve, even to serve the LORD their GOD. And all his days they departed not from following the LORD, the GOD of their fathers.

And the king commanded all the people, saying, Keep the Passover unto the LORD your GOD, as it is written in the book of this covenant.

And in the eighteenth year of king Josiah, this Passover was holden to the LORD in Jerusalem.

Surely there was not holden such a Passover, from the days of the judges that judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah ;

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

After destroying all that belonged to idol worship, and cleansing and beautifying the Temple, the good Josiah was desirous of restoring the service of the LORD, according to its original institution. How wonderful it is to read, that no sooner did he set about this design, than the original law, of which the kingdom had been deprived while it was addicted to idolatry, was unexpectedly brought to light !

The * copy found by Hilkiah is thought to have been that written by Moses, and by him commanded to be deposited with the Ark, in the MOST HOLY PLACE ; but which some pious priest had thus caused to be hid in the reign of Ahaz or Manasseh, to prevent its being destroyed. We can hardly suppose that all the copies of the law, which were very numerous in the days of Hezekiah were destroyed ; but Josiah certainly had never, as the LORD † required transcribed it

* Universal History.

† Deut. 17, 18.

with his own hand ; because the only authentic copy was not to be found. The high priest, therefore, had great reason to rejoice when the original came to light, and Jofiah's attention was particularly awakened to a more serious consideration of the undoubted original book of Moses, so as to observe passages which might before have escaped his observation. It seems to have been by the direction of *Divine Providence*, that Shaphan opened the book at that part of it which contained the curses denounced against the people of Israel, and the king in particular, for a neglect of the LAW. Jofiah resolved to leave nothing undone, that was in his power, to complete the reformation of his kingdom ; and therefore determined to assemble the people, in order to inform them that he had found the LAW OF MOSES, and to let them hear the *Words* of the COVENANT, which he read to them, as the LORD commanded ; and then solemnly declared his own resolution to observe the conditions of it in the strictest manner, and required his subjects to do the same.

He next proposed to restore the observance of the three great festivals ; and directed preparations to be made for a passover, which is said to have been *such a one as had not been holden in Israel since the days of the judges, &c.* from which we may understand, that it was celebrated with the most punctual observance of every direction given by Moses, which perhaps might not have been attended to formerly.

In order that the people of Israel and Judah might afterwards have no excuse for their wickedness, they were warned before they had arrived to the highest degree of guilt, by the prophet Jeremiah, who continued to declare unto them the dreadful judgments which they would provoke the LORD to send upon them.

S E C T. XXXII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

THUS saith the LORD to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns.

Correct your hearts, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem: lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doing.

Declare ye in Judah, and publish in Jerusalem, and say, Blow ye the trumpet in the land: cry, gather together, and say, Assemble yourselves, and let us go into the fenced cities.

Set up the standard towards Zion: retire, stay not, for I will bring evil from the north, and a great destruction.

The lion is come up from his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles is on his way; he is gone forth from his place to make thy land desolate, and thy city shall be laid waste, without an inhabitant.

For this gird you with sackcloth, lament and howl: for the fierce anger of the LORD is not turned back from us.

And it shall come to pass at that day, saith the LORD, that the heart of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes: and the priests shall be astonished, and the prophets shall wonder.

Then

Then said I, Ah LORD GOD, surely thou hast greatly deceived this people, and Jerusalem, saying, Ye shall have peace; whereas the sword reacheth unto the soul.

At that time shall it be said to this people, and to Jerusalem, A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness, toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse.

Even a full wind from those places shall come unto me: now also will I give sentence against them.

Behold, he shall come up as clouds, and his chariots shall be as a whirlwind: his horses are swifter than eagles: wo unto us, for we are spoiled.

O Jerusalem, wash thine heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee?

For a voice declareth from Dan, and publisheth affliction from mount Ephraim.

Make ye mention to the nations, behold, publish against Jerusalem, that watchers come from a far country, and give out their voice against the cities of Judah.

As keepers of a field, are they against her round about; because she hath been rebellious against me, saith the LORD.

Thy way and thy doings have procured these things unto thee, this is thy wickedness, because it is bitter: because it reacheth unto thine heart.

My bowels, my bowels, I am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a noise in me, I cannot hold

my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

Destruction upon destruction is cried, for the whole land is spoiled: suddenly are my tents spoiled, and my curtains in a moment.

How long shall I see the standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet?

For my people are foolish, they have not known me, they are sottish children, and they have none understanding: they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge.

I beheld the earth, and lo, it was without form and void: and the heavens, and they had no light.

I beheld the mountains, and lo, they trembled: and all the hills moved lightly.

I beheld, and lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled.

I beheld, and lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down at the presence of the LORD, and by his fierce anger.

For thus hath the LORD said, The whole land shall be desolate; yet will I not make a full end.

For this shall the earth mourn, and the heavens above be black: because I have spoken it, I have purposed it, and will not repent, neither will I turn back from it.

The whole city shall flee, for the noise of the horsemen and bow-men, they shall go into thickets, and climb up upon the rocks: every city shall be forsaken, and not a man dwell therein.

And

And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair, thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life.

For I have heard a voice as of a woman in her utmost pain and anguish; the voice of the daughter of Zion: that bewaileth herself, that spreadeth her hands, saying, Wo is me now, for my soul is wearied because of murderers.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jeremiah saw with his mind's eye, by Divine inspiration, the conqueror on his march to execute Divine vengeance on Judah; and the various calamities that would ensue. —He laments, in the most pathetic terms, the approaching ruin of his country; and calls upon his cotemporaries most affectionately in the name of the LORD, to repent and amend before it became too late. The sad catastrophe is next represented by a beautiful assemblage of the most lively images.

S E C T. XXXIII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

RUN ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth, and I will pardon it.

And though they say, The LORD liveth, surely they swear falsely.

O LORD, are not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return.

Therefore I said, Surely these are poor, they are foolish: for they know not the way of the LORD, nor the judgment of their GOD.

I will get me unto the great men, and will speak unto them; for they have known the way of the LORD, and the judgment of their GOD: but these have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.

Wherefore a lion out of the forest shall slay them, and a wolf of the evenings shall spoil them, a leopard shall watch over their cities: every one that goeth out thence shall be torn in pieces: because their transgressions are many, and their backslidings are increased.

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: and shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

Go ye up upon her walls, and destroy, but make not a full end: take away her battlements, for they are not the LORD's.

For the house of Israel, and the house of Judah, have dealt very treacherously against me, saith the LORD.

They have belied the LORD, and said, It is not He, neither shall evil come upon us, neither shall we see sword nor famine: And

And the prophets shall become wind, and the word is not in them: thus shall it be done unto them.

Wherefore thus saith the LORD GOD of hosts, Because ye speak this word, behold, I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them.

Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

Their quiver is as an open sepulchre; they are all mighty men.

And they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds; they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig-trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities wherein thou trustest, with the sword.

Nevertheless in those days, saith the LORD, I will not make a full end of you.

And it shall come to pass when ye shall say, Wherefore doth the LORD our GOD all these things unto us? then shalt thou answer them, Like as ye have forsaken me, and served strange gods in your land; so shall ye serve strangers in a land that is not yours.

Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding, which have eyes and see not, which have ears and hear not: fear ye not me? saith the LORD: will ye not tremble at my presence, which

which have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail: though they roar, yet can they not pass over it?

But this people hath a revolting and a rebellious heart: they are revolted and gone.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our GOD, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you.

For among my people are found wicked men: they lay wait as he that setteth snares, they set a trap, they catch men.

As a cage is full of birds, so are their houses full of deceit: therefore they are become great, and waxen rich.

They are waxen fat, they shine: yea, they overpass the deeds of the wicked: they judge not the cause, the cause of the fatherless, yet they prosper: and the right of the needy do they not judge.

Shall I not visit for these things? saith the LORD: shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?

A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land.

The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means, and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?

To

To whom shall I speak and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is alienated, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it.

Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon the assembly of young men together: for even the husband with the wife shall be taken, the aged with him that is full of days.

And their houses shall be turned unto others, with their fields and wives together: for I will stretch out my hand upon the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD.

For from the least of them even unto the greatest of them every one is given to covetousness, and from the prophet even unto the priest, every one dealeth falsely.

They have healed also the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them, they shall be cast down, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein.

Also

Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken.

Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them.

Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it.

To what purpose cometh there to me incense from Sheba? and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices sweet unto me.

Therefore thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people, and the fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them; the neighbour and his friend shall perish.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth.

They shall lay hold on bow and spear: they are cruel, and have no mercy: their voice roareth like the sea, and they ride upon horses, set in array as men of war against thee, O daughter of Zion.

We have heard the fame thereof; our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain as of a woman in her heaviest anguish.

Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way: for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Having described the judgments impending on the nation, the prophet enlarges on the corruption that would prevail among the people, which are affirmed to be the cause of their ruin.—More particularly GOD is introduced as complaining of the corruption of Judah; which He foreknew would become so great, that if one righteous person was to save Jerusalem, that one would not be found.—The prophet then complains that this corruption would not be confined to the lower orders of people, but would include the higher ranks, and then, in the name of GOD, calls, by way of anticipation, upon the enemy, to destroy the city of Jerusalem, that devoted city whose inhabitants added to their other sins, the highest contempt of GOD's word and prophets.—The prophet seeing, in idea, the enemy on their march, bids his people set up the usual signals of distress, and spread the general alarm, to betake themselves to flight.—GOD is then represented as directing the besiegers against this guilty city, which sinned as incessantly as a fountain flows, altho' warned of the fatal consequence.—He intimates, that one invasion should carry away the remains of another, till their disobedience, hypocrisy, and other sins, should end in their total overthrow; and calls upon the whole world to witness the equity of GOD's proceedings in thus punishing them.

This portion of Scripture is calculated to awaken in every breast, serious reflections on the dreadful effects of national sin, which should lead every individual to amend his own ways*.

* The 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th and 12th chapters of Jeremiah may be read here, with Dr. Smith's Comment on them;—from which, great part of the foregoing Annotations are extracted.

S E C T.

S E C T XXXIV.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF JOSIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

AFTER all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Necho king of Egypt came up to fight against Charchemish by Euphrates: and Josiah went out against him.

But Necho sent ambassadors to him, saying, What have I to do with thee, thou king of Judah? I come not against thee this day, but against the house where-with I have war: for God commanded me to make haste: forbear thee from meddling with God, who is with me, that he destroy thee not.

Nevertheless Josiah would not turn his face from him, but disguised himself that he might fight with him, and hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of God, and came to fight in the valley of Megiddo.

And the archers shot at king Josiah: and the king said to his servants, Have me away; for I am sore wounded.

His servants therefore took him out of that chariot and put him into the second chariot that he had; and they brought him to Jerusalem, and he died, and was buried in one of the sepulchres of his fathers, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

And

And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the LORD with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.

Notwithstanding, the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath, wherewith his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal.

And the LORD said, I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and will cast off this city Jerusalem, which I have chosen, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.

And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah: and all the singing men and singing women spake of Josiah in their lamentations to this day, and made them an ordinance in Israel: and behold, they are written in the lamentations.

Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his goodness, according to that which was written in the law of the LORD.

And his deeds, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Josiah had reigned 31 years in profound peace, when he resolved to oppose Pharaoh Necho in his expedition against Assyria. From this circumstance we may judge, that an alliance subsisted between the king of Judah and the Assyrian monarch.

We

We are told, that *Josiah hearkened not unto the words of Necho from the mouth of GOD*. It cannot be thought that this idolatrous prince had received an express revelation from the LORD JEHOVAH; we may rather suppose, that he had heard some prediction respecting himself, spoken by one of the LORD's prophets, which he made use of to intimidate Josiah; and this opinion is confirmed by a passage in the first book of Esdras, relating to this event, which intimates, that Jeremiah had uttered a prophecy concerning the success of Necho against the king of Assyria *. In this case Josiah was certainly guilty of a transgression in going against the king of Egypt: besides, he had been warned by Jeremiah himself to have no concerns with Egypt or Assyria †; and he paid dear for his inattention.

Notwithstanding the reformation which appeared in the kingdom, it is said, that *the LORD turned not from the fierceness of his great wrath—because of all the provocations that Manasseh had provoked him withal*. We must not suppose that the people were destined to destruction for the sins which Manasseh himself committed (for *he* by repentance and humility obtained the pardon of GOD) but for *their own concurrence* in them, and inclination to repeat them. The land was defiled by the *innocent blood* that was spilt in the days of Manasseh, and by the *introduction of an idol into the SANCTUARY*; yet the people continued indifferent to the honour of the LORD, and were not solicitous to regain his favour. They observed, indeed, the ceremonials of religion, from a fear of the king's authority; but neglected to reform their morals, notwithstanding the repeated admonitions of the prophets, some of which we have lately read.

It might be said, that *Josiah went down to his grave in peace*, as the LORD had promised by Huldah the prophetess,

* 1. Esdras 1. 28.

† See Section 29.

because

because he was taken away whilst his kingdom was in a prosperous state, before the calamities with which it was threatened came upon it, and whilst he was in peace and reconciliation with GOD, who did not send the king of Egypt against him.

The death of this excellent prince was deservedly lamented by all his people.

S E C T. XXXV.

PART OF THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH.

HOW doth the city fit solitary that was full of people! how is she become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! She weepeth fore in the night, and her tears are on her cheeks: among all her lovers she hath none to comfort her: all her friends have dealt treacherously with her, they are become her enemies.

Judah is gone into captivity, because of affliction, and because of great servitude: she dwelleth among the heathen, she findeth no rest: all her persecutors overtook her between the straits.

The ways of Zion do mourn, because none come to the solemn feasts: all her gates are desolate: her priests sigh, her virgins are afflicted, and she is in bitterness.

Her adversaries are the chief, her enemies prosper: for the LORD hath afflicted her for the multitude of her

her transgressions: her children are gone into captivity before the enemy.

And from the daughter of Zion all her beauty is departed: her princes are become like harts that find no pasture, and they are gone without strength before the pursuer.

Jerusalem remembered in the days of her affliction and of her miseries all her pleasant things that she had in the days of old, when her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the adversaries saw her, and did mock at her sabbaths.

The adversary hath spread out his hand upon all her pleasant things: for she hath seen that the heathen entered into her sanctuary, whom thou didst command that they should not enter into thy congregation.

All her people sigh, they seek bread, they have given their pleasant things for meat to relieve the soul: see, O LORD, and consider; for I am become vile.

Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by; behold, and see, if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is done unto me; wherewith the LORD hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger

From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaieth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made me desolate, and faint all the day.

The yoke of my transgressions is bound by his hand: they are wreathed, and come up upon my neck:

he

he hath made my strength to fall, the LORD hath delivered me into their hands from whom I am not able to rise up.

The LORD hath trodden under foot all my mighty men in the midst of me: he hath called an assembly against me to crush my young men: the LORD hath trodden the virgin the daughter of Judah as in a wine press.

For these things I weep; mine eye, mine eye runneth down with water, because the comforter that should relieve my soul is far from me: my children are desolate because the enemy prevailed.

Zion spreadeth forth her hands, and there is none to comfort her; the LORD hath commanded concerning Jacob, that his adversaries should be round about him.

The LORD is righteous; for I have rebelled against his commandment: hear, I pray you, all people, and behold my sorrow; my virgins and my young men are gone into captivity.

I called for my lovers, but they deceived me: my priests and mine elders gave up the ghost in the city, while they sought their meat to relieve their souls.

Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled, mine heart is turned within me; for I have grievously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

They have heard that I sigh: there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble: they

they are glad that thou hast done it : thou wilt bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

Let all their wickedness come before thee ; and do unto them, as thou hast done unto me for all my transgressions : for my sighs are many, and my heart is faint.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This section is extracted from a book of beautiful elegies, which are preserved among the prophetic writings, under the title of the *Lamentations of Jeremiah*. It is supposed that they were written on the death of Josiah ; and they very pathetically express the sorrow which the prophet is said to have felt at the loss of that good king, for whose sake the judgment of God had been suspended, and which were now ready to fall on that devoted nation.

S U P P L E M E N T.

PART OF THE HISTORY OF THE HEATHEN NATIONS WHICH WERE CONNECTED WITH THE JEWS.

It has been before related, that after the death of Esarhaddon, Sardanapalus (called in Scripture Nebuchadonofar) succeeded to the crown of Assyria. He was a warlike prince, remarkable for the great advantages he had gained over the Medes, who, under the conduct of their king, invaded Assyria. Nebuchadonofar raised a powerful army, and defeated them, and killed their king. After this victory, he entered Media, and extending his conquests to the famous city

city of Ecbatana, the capital of that kingdom, levelled it with the ground. He then returned to Nineveh, and celebrated his victory, by revelling and feasting for one hundred and fifty days; then resuming his martial spirit, he resolved to subdue the whole earth*, but died in the midst of his career.

Nebuchadonofar was succeeded by Chynaladan. In his reign, the Medes, with Cyaxaris, a young and warlike prince, at their head, not only recovered what the Assyrians formerly took from them, but defeated them in a pitched battle, and forced them to take shelter in Nineveh, their capital city, which they closely besieged; but were obliged to abandon their enterprize, and employ their arms in the defence of their own country, against the Scythians, who had invaded it.

In the mean time Nabopolassar, a Babylonian general, whom Chynaladan had intrusted with the command of his troops in Chaldea, taking advantage of the low ebb to which the Assyrian power was reduced, revolted from him, and seized on the kingdom of Babylon for himself. Chynaladan, on hearing this, set fire to his palace, and was consumed with his wealth in the flames. Who were his successors, history does not inform us.

In the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Josiah†, which was the twenty-third of Cyaxaris king of Media, Nabopolassar king of Babylon, having married his son Nebuchadnezzar to the daughter of Astyages, Cyaxaris's eldest son, entered into a confederacy with him against the Assyrians; and joining their forces together, they besieged Nineveh, slew the king, and destroyed that ancient and noble city; from which time, Babylon became the metropolis of the Assyrian monarchy.

* Universal History.

† Prideaux's Connection.

In the destruction of Nineveh was fulfilled the prophecy of Nahum, written about 60 years before*, concerning it. The Babylonians and Medes having thus destroyed Nineveh, the surrounding nations were alarmed at their growing power and greatness; particularly Pharaoh-Necho, king of Egypt, who marched, as we have lately read, to make war upon them, with a great army.

* See Section 21.

S E C T. XXXVI.

THE REIGN OF JEHOAHAZ, (CALLED ALSO SHALLUM) KING OF JUDAH—AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

THEN the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead, in Jerusalem.

Jehoahaz was twenty and three years old when he began to reign.

And he did evil in the sight of the LORD.

And this is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Stand in the gate of the LORD's house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all ye of Judah, that enter in at these gates to worship the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, Amend your ways, and your doings; and I will cause you to dwell in this place.

Trust

Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the LORD the temple of the LORD, are these.

For if ye throughly amend your ways and your doings: if ye throughly execute judgement between a man and his neighbour; if ye oppress not the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and shed not innocent blood in this place, neither walk after other gods to your hurt:

Then will I cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers, for ever and ever.

Behold, ye trust in lying words that cannot profit.

Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; and come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations?

Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD, but go ye now unto my place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel.

And now, because ye have done all these works, saith the LORD, and I spake unto you, rising up early, and speaking, but ye heard not; and I called you, but ye answered not; therefore will I do unto this house which is called by my name, wherein ye trust, and unto the place which I gave to you and to your fathers, as I have done to Shiloh.

And I will cast you out of my sight, as I have cast out all your brethren, even the whole seed of Ephraim.

Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear thee.

Seest thou not what they do in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

The children gather wood, and the fathers kindle the fire, and the women knead their dough, to make cakes to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto other gods, that they may provoke me to anger.

Do they provoke me to anger? saith the LORD: do they not provoke themselves to the confusion of their own faces?

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, mine anger and my fury shall be poured out upon this place, upon man and upon beast, and upon the trees of the field, and upon the fruit of the ground; and it shall burn, and shall not be quenched.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel: Put your burnt-offerings unto your sacrifices, and eat flesh.

For I spake not unto your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, merely concerning burnt-offerings or sacrifices:

But this thing commanded I them, saying, Obey my voice, and I will be your God, and ye shall be my

my people : and walk ye in all the ways that I have commanded you, that it may be well unto you.

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward.

Since the day that your fathers came forth out of the land of Egypt unto this day, I have even sent unto you all my servants the prophets, daily rising up early, and sending them :

Yet they hearkened not unto me, nor inclined their ear, but hardened their neck ; they did worse than their fathers.

Therefore thou shalt speak all these words unto them ; but they will not hearken to thee : thou shalt also call unto them : but they will not answer thee.

But thou shalt say unto them, This is a nation that obeyeth not the voice of the LORD their God, nor receiveth correction : truth is perished, and is cut off from their mouth.

Cut off thine hair, O Jerusalem, and cast it away ; and take up a lamentation on high places : for the LORD hath rejected and forsaken the generation of his wrath.

For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD : they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it.

And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn

their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart.

Therefore behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but, The valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place.

And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth: and none shall fray them away.

Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

Moreover, thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; shall they fall, and not arise? shall he turn away, and not return?

Why then is this people of Jerusalem sliddden back by a perpetual backsliding? they hold fast deceit, they refuse to return.

I hearkened and heard, but they spake not aright: no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? every one turned to his course, as the horse rusheth into the battle.

Yea, the stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the LORD.

How

How do ye say, We are wise, and the law of the LORD is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

The wise men are ashamed, they are dismayed and taken; lo, they have rejected the word of the LORD; and what wisdom is in them?

Therefore will I give their wives unto others, and their fields to them that shall inherit them: for every one from the least even unto the greatest is given to covetousness, from the prophet even unto the priest every one dealeth falsely.

For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall; in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down, from the LORD.

Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!

Oh, that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men; that I might leave my people, and go from them: for they be all idolators, an assembly of treacherous men.

And they bend their tongues like their bow for lies: but they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth: for they proceed from evil to evil, and they know not me, saith the LORD.

Take ye heed every one of his neighbour, and trust ye not in any brother ; for every brother will utterly supplant, and every neighbour will walk with slanders.

And they will deceive every one his neighbour, and will not speak the truth ; they have taught their tongue to speak lies, and weary themselves to commit iniquity.

Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit : through deceit they refuse to know me, saith the LORD.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will melt them, and try them, for how shall I do for the daughter of my people ?

Their tongue is as an arrow shot out ; it speaketh deceit : one speaketh peaceably to his neighbour with his mouth, but in his heart he layeth wait.

Shall I not visit them for these things ? saith the LORD : shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this ?

Who is the wise man, that may understand this ? and who is he to whom the mouth of the LORD hath spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land perisheth, and is burned up like a wilderness, that none passeth through ?

And the LORD saith, Because they have forsaken my law which I set before them, and have not obeyed my voice, neither walked therein ; but have walked after the imagination of their own heart, and after Baalim, which their fathers taught them :

Therefore

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will feed them, even this people with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink.

I will scatter them also among the heathen, whom neither they nor their fathers have known: and I will send a sword after them, till I have consumed them.

Thus saith the LORD; Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches:

But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD, which exercise loving kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

Hear ye, and give ear, be not proud: for the LORD hath spoken.

Give glory to the LORD your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness.

But if ye will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and mine eye shall weep fore, and run down with tears, because the LORD's flock is carried away captive.

Say unto the king, and to the queen, Humble yourselves, sit down: for your principalities shall come down, even the crown of your glory.

The cities of the south shall be shut up, and none shall open them: Judah shall be carried away captive all of it, it shall be wholly carried away captive.

Then said I, Ah, LORD GOD! behold, the prophets say unto them, Ye shall not see the sword, neither shall ye have famine; but I will give you assured peace in this place.

Then the LORD said unto me, The prophets prophesy lies in my name: I sent them not, neither have I commanded them, neither spake unto them: they prophesy unto you a false vision, and divination, and a thing of nought, and the deceit of their heart.

Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that prophesy in my name, and I sent them not, yet they say, Sword and famine shall not be in this land; By sword and famine shall those prophets be consumed.

And the people to whom they prophesy shall be cast out in the streets of Jerusalem because of the famine and the sword; and they shall have none to bury them, them, their wives, nor their sons, nor their daughters: for I will pour their wickedness upon them.

Then said the LORD unto me, Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind could not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth.

And it shall come to pass, if they say unto thee, Whither shall we go forth? then thou shalt tell them,

Thus

Thus saith the LORD; Such as are for death to death; and such as are for the sword, to the sword, and such as are for the famine, to the famine; and such as are for the captivity, to the captivity.

And I will appoint over them four kinds, saith the LORD: the sword to slay; and the dogs to tear; and the fowls of the heaven, and the beasts of the earth, to devour and destroy; and I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoahaz was not the rightful heir to the crown, for he was not chosen by the LORD, but elected by the people. He soon discovered his propensity to wickedness, and the prophet Jeremiah continued his admonitions.

“In the extract from his writings, which make the principal part of this section, the prophet exhorts his countrymen to amend their lives, without which, he tells them, their confidence in the Temple is vain, and their trust in sacrifices, without obedience, of no avail. God’s threatenings are then repeated in a variety of terms. An awful message is sent to the royal family in particular; and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem in general. The prophet pleading for the people, complains of false prophets. To this God replies, that no intercession could now divert him from his purpose of punishing so wicked a people.”

This section should be received as an admonition by all nations, who are in covenant with the LORD; for he is no respecter of persons. It concerns Christians as well as Jews, for alas! the same vices, if we except open idolatry, prevail amongst the latter, as were practised by the former; though they are not yet arrived at such a pitch of general corrup-

tion.—This prophecy plainly intimates, that an obstinate perseverance in wickedness will at length exclude, even the most favoured nations, from Divine grace:—no intercession can then prevail in their behalf. The day of grace once past, will never return to any nation, so as to preserve it from destruction, when the measure of its iniquity is full.

S E C T. XXXVII.

JEHOAHAZ DEPOSED—JEHOIAKIM MADE KING OF JUDAH.

AND Pharaoh Necho King of Egypt put down Jehoahaz, when he had reigned three months in Jerufalem, and put him in bands at Riblah, that he might not reign, and put the land to a tribute of an hundred talents of silver, and a talent of gold.

And Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim, and took Jehoahaz away: and he came to Egypt and died there.

And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh; but he taxed the land to give the money according to the commandment of Pharaoh; he exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, of every one according to his taxation, to give it unto Pharaoh Necho.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Before Jehoahaz had an opportunity of committing many impious acts, Pharaoh Necho, having taken Carchemish, a great city belonging to the Babylonians, was returning towards Egypt, when hearing that Jehoahaz was made King of Judah, without his concurrence, and probably that he was in arms against him, made him captive, placed his brother on the throne, and rendered the people of Judah tributary to him. This last circumstance was very humiliating, but it was only the beginning of sorrows;—greater calamities were yet in store for this rebellious land.

S U P P L E M E N T.

In the third year of Jehoiakim, Nabopolassar, king of Babylon, finding that on Pharaoh-Necho's taking Carchemish, all Syria and Palestine had revolted to him, and being, on account of his age and infirmities, unable to march thither to reduce them, he made Nebuchadnezzar his son his associate in the empire, and sent him with an army into those parts.

S E C T. XXXVIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH.

JEHOIAKIM was twenty five years old when he began to reign; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

In

In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word of the LORD to Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Stand in the court of the LORD's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD's house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil which I propose to do unto them, because of the evil of their doings.

And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD, If ye will not hearken to me to walk in my law which I have set before you, to hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

So the priests and the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

Now it came to pass when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people took him saying, Thou shalt surely die.

Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall

shall be desolate without an inhabitant? and all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house.

Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die: for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your GOD; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you: But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets, This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our GOD.

Then

Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerufalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them; thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjath-jearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah.

And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt.

And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt.

And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king: who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

Never-

Nevertheless, the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from the beginning of this section, that Jehoiakim proved as wickedly inclined as his brother; and the people, who never entered heartily into Josiah's plans of reformation, continued to follow their own wicked inclinations, which led them on progressively into all kinds of impiety and immorality. The prophet Jeremiah repeated his admonitions, and declared to them what had been revealed to him; but met with nothing from the generality of them, but insult and oppression. The princes indeed were at first inclined to protect him, and seem to have been affected with the denunciation of divine vengeance.

The prediction which Jeremiah delivered at this time, foretold the destruction of the Temple and City, if not prevented by timely repentance. By this unwelcome prophecy, Jeremiah's life was exposed to great danger; but the Lord raised him up a friend, and would not suffer his enemies to prevail against him, as he had promised*.

* See Section 29.

S E C T. XXXIX.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM,
KING OF JUDAH, AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

AND in the days of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up
against

against Judah, then the WORD of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. And Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day; that is the three and twentieth year, the WORD of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever: And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands, and I will do you no hurt.

Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your own hurt.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Because ye have not heard my words, Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and

and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

Moreover, I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

And this whole land shall be a desolation and an astonishment: and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans; and will make it perpetual desolations.

And I will bring upon that land all my words, which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day; Pharaoh king of Egypt, and
his

his servants, and his princes, and all his people: and all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod, Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon.

And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea, Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners, and all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert, and all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes, and all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach after them.

For lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly unpunished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation, he shall give a shout as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will

will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was related in a former section, that Pharaoh Necho carried Jehoahaz captive into Egypt, and made Jehoiakim his brother king of Judah, on condition of his becoming tributary to him; and that Jehoiakim was obliged to lay very heavy taxes on his subjects, to enable him to keep his engagements. Soon after this, Nebuchadnezzar defeated the Egyptians, and marched towards Palestine, in order to make the king of Judah tributary to him.

The LORD was now preparing to pour forth his indignation; and that it might be known to be His work, and not the mere effect of human ambition, Jeremiah was commissioned to repeat the substance of what he had before said, with additional circumstances.—He now expressly named the conqueror, who was to be the instrument of GOD's wrath against Israel and Judah; the other nations he was to subdue, the duration of the Jewish captivity, and the subsequent punishment of the kingdom of Babylon.

S E C T. XL.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

AND it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee, against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them: that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD: Therefore go thou and read in the roll which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people in the LORD's house upon the fasting day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah, that come out of their cities.

And these are the words that Jeremiah spoke unto Baruch.

Thus

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch; Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow: I fainted in my sighing, and I find no rest.

The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not? for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD's house.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It appears from this section, that Jehoiakim did not take warning from the prophet's admonitions, but had carried his resentment against him so far, as to cause him to be shut up in prison, while he and his people pursued their wicked courses; yet the LORD would not destroy them without using every means to bring them to repentance; he therefore commanded the prophet to write his predictions*, since he was not at liberty to go and speak to them, that Baruch, who was a disciple of Jeremiah's, might read them publicly to the people, who should assemble from all parts on the great day of expiation †, (which still continued to be observed annually) according to

* Contained in some of the chapters, which I had not room to insert.

† Lev. xvi, 29.

the law of Moses, that they might be induced, when collected together on so solemn an occasion, to present their supplications to the LORD, and endeavour to deprecate his wrath, by speedy and sincere repentance.—What effect this measure had is not related.

S U P P L E M E N T.

It is likely that Jehoiakim and the princes were absent from Jerusalem, making preparations to resist the power of Nebuchadnezzar, or else in such great consternation, that they did not express any resentment against Jeremiah and Baruch, on account of the roll which they had published to the people.

S E C T. XLI.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM, AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

AND Jehoiakim became the servant of Nebuchadnezzar. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.

Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD's house, in the ears of all the people.

W

When Micaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD.

Then he went down into the king's house into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of She-maiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

Then Micaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.

Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

Then Baruch answered them: He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.

Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou, and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

And they went unto the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama, the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

Now the king sat in the winter-house, in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed.

Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

Then

Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,

Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD: Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

And I will punish him and his seed, and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems that Nebuchadnezzar accomplished his design of making Jehoiakim tributary to him, and then departed from Judea.

It was at the return of the great day of expiation, that Baruch was sent to read the roll a second time; the king and people continued to encrease in wickedness.

The chamber of Gemariah the scribe, was the room where the king's council used to sit. The lords of the council were greatly terrified, and were solicitous to preserve the prophet and his disciple from the effects of the king's indignation, which they imagined would be excited by this action. It proved as they expected; for the impious Jehoiakim, disregarding the word of the LORD, burnt the leaves as they were read, till the roll was entirely consumed; and would have destroyed the prophet, but that Divine providence interposed in his preservation.

S E C T. XLII.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH.

AND Jehoiakim continued the servant of Nebuchadnezzar three years, then he turned and rebelled against him.

And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it; according to the word

word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

Surely at the commandment of the LORD came this upon Judah, to remove them out of his sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; And also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the LORD would not pardon.

Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim, and his abominations which he did, and that which was found in him, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah.

So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers: and Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

And the king of Egypt came not again any more out of his land: for the king of Babylon had taken from the river of Egypt unto the river Euphrates all that pertained to the king of Egypt.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoiakim, after having served the king of Babylon three years, refused to pay him tribute, and renewed his confederacy with Pharaoh-Necho; other nations also annoyed him.

The LORD permitted the King of Judah to be molested with such various enemies, on account of his disobedience to the divine will. In what manner he died we are not informed, but there is no doubt his death was ignominious, and as the prophet had foretold, and his memory hateful. The Jews, to this day, observe a fast in commemoration of Jehoiakim's burning the roll which Baruch read.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, died one year before Jehoiakim, having reigned sixteen years, and was succeeded by Psammis his son.

S E C T. XLIII.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN, (CALLED ALSO JECONIAH AND CONIAH) KING OF JUDAH; AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

JEHOIACHIN was eighteen years when he began to reign, and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

Then said the LORD to Jeremiah, Go now down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates :

Thus saith the LORD ; Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor : and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

For

For if ye do this thing indeed: then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Cilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

Then they shall answer; Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is cieled with cedar, and painted with vermillion.

Shalt thou reign, because thou clovest thyself in cedar? did not thy father (David) eat and drink, and do

judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

He judged the cause of the poor and needy: then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness; and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

Thus saith the LORD; Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

That Jehoiachin might have no reason to complain of being delivered into the enemy's hands without warning, the prophet Jeremiah (who, we may suppose, obtained his liberty at the late king's death) was sent to recommend to him and his people, the practice of justice and equity, as they would hope to prosper, and to threaten them in case of disobedience, with utter destruction.—Jehoiachin was threatened with a miserable end, and his family declared to be for ever excluded from the throne.

S E C T. XLIV.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF JEHOIACHIN, KING OF JUDAH.

AND when Jehoiachin had reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and done that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up against Jerusalem, and the city was besieged.

And Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came against the city, and his servants did besiege it.

And at the end of the year Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he, and his mother, and his servants, and his princes, and his officers: and the king of Babylon took him in the eighth year of his reign.

And he carried out thence all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, as the LORD had said.

And he carried away all Jerusalem, and all the princes, and all the mighty men of valour, even ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen, and smiths: none remained, save the poorest sort of the people of the land.

And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon, and the king's mother, and the king's wives, and his officers, and the mighty of the land, those carried he into captivity, from Jerusalem to Babylon.

And all the men of might, even seven thousand, and craftsmen, and smiths a thousand, all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.

And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah his father's brother king in his stead, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jehoiachin was not restrained from his wickedness by the prophet's denunciations, neither would he humble himself before the LORD, and therefore he was left to suffer the consequences of his folly and obduracy.

Nebuchadnezzar's lieutenants and governors of the provinces, continued to besiege Jerusalem after the death of Jehoiachin: at the end of three months the king of Babylon
came

came against it in person, with his royal army. Jehoiachin, unable to defend the city, submitted as we read; but Nebuchadnezzar put him in chains and sent him to Babylon, where he continued a miserable captive till the death of that monarch, which was thirty-six years. "Had Jehoiachin taken the method which Hezekiah did, and made his peace with GOD, he would have had no cause to fear the king of Babylon, but might have held out with courage, honour, and success; but wanting the faith and piety of an Israelite, he had not the resolution of a man, a soldier, and a prince." Now was fulfilled the word of GOD, spoken by Moses. *The LORD shall bring against thee a nation from afar, of fierce countenance, that shall eat the fruit of thy land, and besiege thee in all thy gates.*

We find that Nebuchadnezzar carried with him vast quantities of spoil, and a great many captives. He had taken some away eight years before this, among whom were Daniel and his friends; these had behaved so well, that the king was desirous to have more such. He also took all the great men and principal officers, lest they should raise conspiracies against him; and carried the smiths away, in order that the inhabitants of Jerusalem might not be able to procure arms.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Nebuchadnezzar, after his departure from Jerusalem, employed all the rest of the year in carrying on his war with the Egyptians; in which he was so successful, that before the ensuing winter, he had driven them out of Syria and Palestine. Shortly after, died Nabopolassar, king of Babylon; having reigned twenty-one years; on hearing which, Nebuchadnezzar hastened home, and was made king in his stead; he had reigned some time with his father. His empire contained

Chaldea, Assyria, Arabia, Syria, and Palestine (the latter included the whole land of Israel). Zedekiah, though called king of Judah, reigned there only as Nebuchadnezzar's deputy.

Nebuchadnezzar changed Mattaniah's name, to shew, that he was entirely dependant on him. *Zedekiah* signifies *the justice of the LORD*, to put him in mind, that he must expect the vengeance of his GOD, if he violated the oath of fidelity which he had taken.

S E C T. XLV.

THE BEGINNING OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH, AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

ZEDEKIAH was twenty and one years old, when he began to reign.

In the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah*, the son of Josiah, king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD to me, Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck, and send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;

* It is supposed, by some learned commentators, that the word *Jehoiachin* is, by the mistake of a transcriber, put for *Zedekiah*; but it is not at all improbable, that Jeremiah received intimation of this event, in the reign of Jehoiachin, and wrote the prophecy.

And

And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, Thus shall ye say unto your masters, I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power, and by my out-stretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

And all nations shall serve him and his son and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him.

And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon; that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your forcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land, and that I should drive you out and ye should perish.

But

But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD, and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

And Jeremiah spake to Zedekiah according to the tenor of these words, saying, Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hearken not to the words of your prophets, that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD's house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon; for they prophesy a lie unto you.

Hearken not unto them, serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

But if they be prophets, and if the word of the
LORD

LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem:

Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and of Jerusalem, they shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD: then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find that Zedekiah followed the bad example of his predecessors, yet the prophet was sent to admonish him and his subjects; for though the LORD had determined the destruction of the city in case the people did not repent, He promised to have compassion on *every individual* who acknowledged their transgressions, and submitted to His ALMIGHTY POWER.

It is supposed that after the departure of Nebuchadnezzar out of Judea and Syria, Zedekiah having settled himself upon

upon the throne, the kings of the Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, Tyrians, and other nations, sent their ambassadors to congratulate him on his accession, and proposed a league with him against the king of Babylon; but the LORD having ordained, that Nebuchadnezzar, who was *the chosen instrument of Divine vengeance*, should, on that account, rule over the kings of the earth, commanded Jeremiah to put a yoke and bands on his neck, as a *significant sign*, calculated to give force to his predictions; and it is likely the prophet *offered* them successively to all the foreign ambassadors mentioned above, in order to prove whether they would give credit to the *word of God* thus solemnly pronounced or not; but we have reason to suppose, that they rejected them with disdain.

S E C T. XLVI.

A FALSE PROPHET CONTRADICTS JEREMIAH'S PREDICTIONS.

AND it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying,

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon:

Within two full years will I bring again into this place all the vessels of the LORD's house that Nebuchadnezzar

buchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place and carried them to Babylon :

And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, with all the captives of Judah that went into Babylon, saith the LORD : for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD, even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen : the LORD do so : the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD's house, and all that is carried away captive from Babylon into this place.

Nevertheless, hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people ; the prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known that the LORD hath truly sent him.

Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.

And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD ; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from

from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

Go, and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD: Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah, The LORD hath not sent thee, but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this, and the preceding section, that there were at Jerusalem false prophets, who flattered the king with hopes of deliverance, from the power of Nebuchadnezzar — How Hananiah could have the presumption to utter such a false

false prediction is astonishing, as the reality of Jeremiah's mission, had been fully proved by the accomplishment of many of his prophecies. It was likely that the king, as well as others, might have given credit to him, who foretold what was most agreeable to their wishes; GOD therefore inspired his own prophets to foretell, that He designed to punish the impostor with sudden death, that, by this awful visitation, the people might be admonished to pay due honour to him, whom the LORD had sent.

S E C T. XLVII.

JEREMIAH'S LETTER TO THE CAPTIVES IN
BABYLON.

NOW these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon.

(After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths were departed from Jerusalem:)

By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have
caused

caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon :

Build ye houses, and dwell in them ; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them ;

Take ye wives, and have sons and daughters ; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters : that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it : for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel ; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to have dreamed.

For they prophesy falsely unto you in my name ; I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

For thus saith the LORD, that after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon, I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

And ye shall seek me and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

And

And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and will gather you from all the nations and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon; know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity; thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten.

And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach among all the nations whither I have driven them:

Because they have not hearkened to my word, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Jeremiah having had a remarkable vision*, and other revelations, respecting the restoration of the Jews to their native

* Chapter 24.

land, took the opportunity of sending a letter by Zedekiah's ambassadors, in order to guard those of his nation who were in captivity, against the delusions of false prophets, who would have deterred them from building or doing any thing else, for their own interest and benefit; he informed them how long their captivity was to continue, and encouraged them to submit to their lot, since it was much to be preferred to that of their brethren, who were left behind in Judea.

This section affords a very instructive lesson to all persons who are in calamitous circumstances, admonishing them not to sink into despair, but to make the best of their condition, since the very dispensation which appears to them a misfortune, may be in reality a blessing in disguise.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Cyaxares, king of Media, after he had reigned 40 years, died; and Astyages his son (called in Scripture Ahafuerus) reigned in his stead.

In the same year, died also, Psammis, king of Egypt, and Apries his son succeeded him. He is in Scripture called Pharaoh Hophra.

S E C T. XLVIII.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH—AND PART OF THE PRO-
PHECY OF JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL.

AND Zedekiah did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and humbled not himself before Jeremiah the Prophet, speaking by the mouth of the LORD.

LORD. And he also rebelled against king Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by GOD to serve him, and sent ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people.

And the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel in the land of the Chaldees, saying, say unto the people of Israel, Thus saith the LORD GOD, This burden concerneth the prince in Jerusalem, and all the house of Israel that are among them.

Say, I am your sign; like as I have done, so shall it be done unto them; they shall remove and go into captivity.

And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes.

My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare; and I will bring him to Babylon to the land of the Chaldeans: yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.

And I will scatter toward every wind all that are about him to help him, and all his bands; and I will draw out the sword after them.

And they shall know that I am the LORD, when I shall scatter them among the nations, and disperse them in the countries.

But I will leave a few men of them from the sword, from the famine, and from the pestilence, that they may

may declare all their abominations among the heathen whither they come; and they shall know that I am the LORD.

Moreover the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel, saying, Say now to the rebellious house, Know ye not what these things mean? tell them, Behold, the king of Babylon is come to Jerusalem, and hath taken the king thereof, and the princes thereof, and led them with him to Babylon: And hath taken of the king's seed, and made a covenant with him, and hath taken an oath of him: he hath also taken the mighty of the land: That the kingdom might be base, that it might not lift itself up, but that by keeping of his covenant it might stand.

But he rebelled against him in sending his ambassadors into Egypt, that they might give him horses and much people: Shall he prosper? shall he escape that doeth such things? or shall he break the covenant, and be delivered? As I live, saith the LORD GOD; surely in the place where the king dwelleth that made him king, whose oath he despised, and whose covenant he brake, even with him in the midst of Babylon he shall die.

Neither shall Pharaoh with his mighty army and great company make for him in the war by casting up mounts, and building forts, to cut off many persons: Seeing he despised the oath by breaking the covenant, when lo, he had given his hand, and hath done all these things, he shall not escape.

Therefore

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; As I live, surely mine oath that he hath despised, and my covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his own head.

And I will spread my net upon him, and he shall be taken in my snare, and I will bring him to Babylon and will plead with him there for his trespass that he hath trespassed against me.

And all his fugitives, with all his bands shall fall by the sword, and they that remain shall be scattered toward all winds: and ye shall know that I the LORD have spoken it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It was in the seventh year of his reign, that Zedekiah sent ambassadors into Egypt, to engage in a confederacy with Pharaoh Hophra. In thus breaking his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, Zedekiah committed a great crime; for he was guilty of perjury, by the breach of his oath, and acted dishonourably in breaking his treaty. He was likewise presumptuous, and foolish to the last degree, in opposing the commands which God had given, that he should submit quietly to Nebuchadnezzar. Ezekiel was among the captives in Babylon, where, we may suppose, he wrote his prediction, and sent it to Jerusalem.

S E C T. LXIX.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH, WITH PART OF THE PRO-
PHECY OF JEREMIAH.

AND it came to pass, in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he, and all his host, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it: and they built forts against it round about.

And this is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof; saying,

Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go, and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD: Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon; and he shall burn it with fire:

And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.

Yet

Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee; Thou shalt not die by the sword:

But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah, lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem, when the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these defended cities remained of the cities of Judah.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is worthy of observation, that Ezekiel, who dwelt in the land of the Chaldeans, and Jeremiah, who was shut up with the rest of those who were besieged in Jerusalem, exactly agreed in their predictions concerning the taking of the city, and a variety of circumstances which were to succeed to this dreadful event; in one particular only they appeared to differ, Ezekiel foretold, that "*Zedekiah should be brought to the land of the Chaldeans, but should not see it.*" Jeremiah predicted, that *he should be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and should speak mouth to mouth with him, and that his eyes should behold his eyes.* We shall find in the sequel, that both these predictions were literally fulfilled.

S E C T. L.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH
KING OF JUDAH.

AND Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our GOD for us.

Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD the GOD of Israel; Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold Pharaoh's army which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

And the Chaldeans shall come again and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.

Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained
but

but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army.

Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

And when he was in the gate of Benjamin a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans, But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It seems, that the king of Babylon raised the siege with a view of intercepting Pharaoh Hophra and his army. It was while the Chaldeans were absent from Jerusalem, that Jeremiah attempted to retire to Ananath, his native country, to avoid the siege, which he knew would be renewed. This was an improper step for the prophet of the LORD to take;

and in all probability his imprisonment was permitted as a Divine chastisement.

The Egyptians, terrified by the appearance of the Chaldeans, withdrew their forces, and retired into their own country, treacherously leaving Zedekiah and his people to perish in the war, which, it is supposed, they had drawn them into.

S E C T. LI.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH,
AND PART OF THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

WHEN Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and Jeremiah had remained there many days; Then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is; for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

Then

Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

On the retreat of the Egyptians, Nebuchadnezzar again renewed the siege of Jerusalem. It was on this occasion that Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah, and consulted him in private. The prophet confirmed his former prediction; and took the opportunity of remonstrating on the hardships that were so unjustly inflicted upon himself, which Zedekiah was prevailed on to mitigate.

S E C T. LI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH, KING OF JUDAH.

AND the city was besieged until the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

And Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pesti-

lence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live: for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

Therefore the princes said unto the king, we beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

Then took they Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son Hammelch, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords, and in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

Now when Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

Ebed-melech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

Then

Then the king commanded Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon before he die.

So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD, and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into the hand of these men that seek thy life.

Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the GOD of hosts, the GOD of Israel; if thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burnt with fire, and thou shalt live, and thine house:

But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans,

left they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee, obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

~ But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me: And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back.

So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death: also what the king said unto thee:

Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words

words that the king had commanded: so they left off speaking with him: for the matter was not perceived.

So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is astonishing to read of the inveterate hatred which the princes bore to the good prophet Jeremiah. The king himself was inclined to be merciful to him; but at such a time of general calamity, his power was nothing, as he himself observed.

Providence again raised up a deliverer for Jeremiah, who, but for the kindness of Ebed-melech, would have perished.

It appears that Zedekiah had some confidence in Jeremiah's prediction; but he suffered his fear of the Jews to influence his actions, in contradiction to his own sentiments.

S U P P L E M E N T.

While Jeremiah was uttering his predictions, Ezekiel had many revelations to the same effect, a comparison of these affords a strong confirmation of the authenticity of each, as the prophets could carry on no collusion at that time.

S E C T. LIII.

THE CALAMITIES OF THE SIEGE.

AND Zedekiah stiffened his neck, and hardened his heart, from turning unto the LORD GOD of Israel.

Moreover, all the chief of the priests, and the people transgressed very much, after all the abominations of the heathen, and polluted the house of the LORD, which he had hallowed in Jerusalem.

And the LORD GOD of their fathers sent to them by his messengers, rising up betimes, and sending; because he had compassion on his people, and on his dwelling-place: but they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against his people, till there was no remedy.

And at length the famine prevailed in the city; and there was no bread for the people to eat. The elders of Zion sat upon the ground, and kept silence; they cast dust upon their heads; they girded themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem hung down their heads to the ground.

The children and the sucklings swooned in the streets of the city; they asked for bread, and no one brake it unto them. They said to their mothers, Where is corn and wine? They swooned as the wounded

wounded in the city; the tongue of the sucking child cleaved to the roof of his mouth for thirst; their soul was poured out into their mother's bosom!

The young and the old lay on the ground in the streets; they that did feed delicately were desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embraced dung-hills.

What shall I liken thee to, O Jerusalem? (said their afflicted prophet) What shall I equal to thee, O virgin, daughter of Zion? let tears run down like a river day and night; give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

Arise, cry out in the night; in the beginning of the watches, pour out thine heart like water before the face of the LORD: lift up thine hands towards him, for the life of the young children that faint for hunger at the top of every street!

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a lively description is this of the miseries of a siege! To what a wretched condition was Jerusalem now reduced.—Let us proceed to the dreadful catastrophe.

S E C T. LIV.

CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF ZEDEKIAH.

AND on the ninth day of the fourth month, in the eleventh year of the reign of Zedekiah, the city was broken up.

And

And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarfechim, Rab-faris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and when they had taken him they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath: where he gave judgment upon him.

Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

And the Chaldeans burned the king's house and the houses of the people with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

And slew their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age: he gave them all into his hand.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find, from this section, that the predictions of Ezekiel and Jeremiah were both exactly fulfilled; for Zedekiah *went* to Babylon, though he did not *see it*, and his *eyes beheld the eyes of the king of Babylon*.

Nebuchadnezzar certainly had cause to be enraged with Zedekiah for his treacherous behaviour; but was guilty of great inhumanity towards him. The king of Judah might have avoided the dreadful effects of his wrath, would he have hearkened to the admonitions of the prophets; but *he mocked the messengers of his GOD, and despised the word of the LORD*. It is hoped, that misfortunes at length humbled his soul into a state of penitence, and that before he died, he made his peace with GOD, *who could abundantly pardon*; and there is reason to suppose this actually was the case.

S E C T. LV.

JERUSALEM AND THE TEMPLE DESTROYED.

AND in the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month, which is the nineteenth year of king Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem:

And he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he with fire.

And

And all the army of the Chaldees, that were with the captain of the guard, brake down the walls of Jerusalem round about.

Now the rest of the people that were left in the city, and the fugitives that fell away to the king of Babylon, with the remnant of the multitude, did Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard carry away.

But the captain of the guard left of the poor of the land to be vine-dressers and husbandmen.

And the pillars of bras that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, did the Chaldees break in pieces, and carried the bras of them to Babylon.

And the pots, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the spoons, and all the vessels of bras wherewith they ministered, took they away.

And the fire-pans, and the bowls, and such things as were of gold, in gold, and of silver, in silver, the captain of the guard took away.

The two pillars, one sea, and the bases which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD; the bras of all these vessels was without weight.

The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and the chapter upon it was bras: and the height of the chapter three cubits; and the wreathenwork, and pomegranates upon the chapter round about, all of bras: and like unto these had the second pillar with wreathen-work.

And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

And

And out of the city he took an officer that was set over the men of war, and five men of them that were in the king's presence, which were found in the city, and the principal scribe of the host, which mustered the people of the land, and threescore men of the people of the land that were found in the city :

And Nebuzar-adan captain of the guard took these, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah : and the king of Babylon smote them, and slew them at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was carried away out of their land.

And them that had escaped from the sword carried he away to Babylon : where they were servants to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia :

To fulfil the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbath : for as long as she lay desolate, she kept sabbath, to fulfil threescore and ten years.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Nebuzar-adan executed the command of his sovereign with the utmost rigour ; and robbing the Temple of the remainder of its valuable treasures, set fire to that noble edifice, which Solomon had built with so much cost and magnificence, which had been the glory of the whole earth ; frequently honoured by the visible PRESENCE of the LORD JEHOVAH, from whence he had graciously received the sacrifices and prayers of his faithful servants, and given them assurances of his favour and loving-kindness !

The

The following extract from the Lamentations of Jeremiah gives a lively description of the distresses occasioned by this dreadful calamity.

S E C T. LVI.

JEREMIAH'S LAMENTATION FOR THE MISERIES OF JUDAH.

HOW hath the LORD covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto the earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger!

The LORD hath swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob, and hath not pitied: he hath thrown down in his wrath the strong holds of the daughter of Judah; he hath brought them down to the ground; he hath polluted the kingdom and the princes thereof.

He hath cut off in his fierce anger all the horn of Israel: he hath drawn back his right hand from before the enemy, and he burned against Jacob like a flaming fire which devoureth round about.

He hath bent his bow like an enemy: he stood with his right hand as an adversary, and slew all that were pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion: he poured out his fury like fire.

The LORD was as an enemy: he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces: he hath
destroyed

destroyed his strong holds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation.

And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden : he hath destroyed his places of the assembly : the LORD hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest.

The LORD hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces ; they have made a noise in the house of the LORD as in the day of a solemn feast.

The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion ; he hath stretched out a line, he hath not withdrawn his hand from destroying : therefore he made the rampart and the wall to lament ; they languished together.

Her gates are sunk into the ground : he hath destroyed and broken her bars : her king and her princes are among the Gentiles : the law is no more : her prophets also find no vision from the LORD.

Mine eyes do fail with tears, my bowels are troubled, my liver is poured upon the earth, for the destruction of the daughter of my people.

Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee ; and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity ; but have seen for thee false burdens, and causes of banishment.

All

All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call the Perfection of beauty, the Joy of the whole earth?

All thine enemies have opened their mouth against thee: they hiss and gnash the teeth: they say, We have swallowed her up: certainly this is the day that we looked for; we have found, we have seen it.

The LORD hath done that which he had devised; he hath fulfilled his word that he had commanded in the days of old: he hath thrown down, and hath not pitied: and he hath caused thine enemy to rejoice over thee, he hath set up the horn of thine adversaries.

Thou hast called as in a solemn day my terrors round about, so that in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained: those that I have swaddled and brought up hath mine enemy consumed.

How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.

The precious sons of Zion, comparable to fine gold, how are they esteemed as earthen pitchers, the work of the hands of the potter!

For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment; and no hands stayed on her.

The

The LORD hath accomplished his fury: he hath poured out his fierce anger, and hath kindled a fire in Zion, and it hath devoured the foundations thereof.

The kings of the earth, and all the inhabitants of the world would not have believed that the adversary and the enemy should have entered into the gates of Jerusalem.

For the sins of her prophets, and the iniquities of her priests, that have shed the blood of the just in the midst of her, they have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

They cried unto them, Depart ye; it is unclean; depart, depart, touch not: when they fled away and wandered, they said among the heathen, They shall no more sojourn there.

The anger of the LORD hath divided them: he will no more regard them: they respected not the persons of the priests they favoured not the elders.

As for us, our eyes as yet failed for our vain help: in our watching we have watched for a nation that could not save us.

They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

The

The breath of our nostrils, the anointed of the LORD, was taken in their pits, of whom we said, Under his shadow we shall live among the heathen.

Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.

Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time? Turn thou us unto thee, O LORD, and we shall be turned: renew our days as of old.

But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It were needless to comment on this affecting elegy; for surely it is impossible to read it without being as it were *inspired* with proper reflections on the fall of Jerusalem, and the miserable fate of those who had long enjoyed such distinguishing blessings and honours as the people of God. It would be equally superfluous to point out the cause of their ruin. One observation, however, it may be proper to make, which is this, that it was not the sin of a few individuals; but the general flood of ungodliness, which overspread the land of Israel and Judah, that provoked the LORD to punish his people so severely.—Let no one then indulge a thought, that the fashion of the age they live in, or the crimes of others, will, in the smallest degree, extenuate their faults. The modes, the habits, the customs, and the laws of a country, may occasionally vary and change; but the obligations of religion, so far as they relate to obedience to the commands of God, remain invariably the same, throughout

out all ages; and whoever fails to observe and practice them, becomes highly culpable in the sight of GOD, and exposes himself to the punishment which every transgressor is assured will one time or other be his portion. Let no one, therefore, *go with the multitude to do evil*; but let each individual watch his own heart; and endeavour, by hourly care and circumspection, to bring themselves to as great a state of perfection as possible; not omitting most earnestly to entreat the SUPREME BEING to lend the assistance of his HOLY SPIRIT; and let every one testify his love for his country, by doing his own part towards inviting the blessing of heaven, and averting the just judgments of an offended GOD!

S E C T. LVII.

THE HISTORY OF JEREMIAH AND OF THE JEWS
WHO WERE LEFT IN JUDEA.

NOW Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm: but do unto him, even as he shall say unto thee.

And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, the LORD thy GOD hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

And

And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come, and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikim the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying, Go, and speak to Ebed-melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good, and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.

For I will surely deliver thee? and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee:

thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

In the preservation of Jeremiah, we have a remarkable instance*, that the wrath of man is often made to advance the temporal prosperity of the righteous. The violence with which wicked men pursued their resentment against this good prophet, might make his predictions known to Nebuchadnezzar, and so engage him in his favour. The attempts of malice to blacken and defame him, brought forth his character with more advantage to the view of impartial beholders; and his imprisonment proved the means of saving him from the more dreadful calamities, which had befallen the other inhabitants of Judea.

Though Baruch is not mentioned, there is great reason to believe, that his life was also preserved, as he received an express promise that it should be given him as a prey†.

Gedaliah, who was made governor over the wretched remainder of the Jews, was the son of that Ahikam‡, who had on a former occasion, shewn such kindness to Jeremiah; and it is probable, that he was appointed to this trust, in consequence of the prophet's recommendation.

* Dr. Blair's sermon on the divine government of the passions of men.

† See Section 41.

‡ Jer. xxvi. 24.

S E C T. LVIII.

THE HISTORY OF GEDALIAH.

NOW when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men and women and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon?

Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophatite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

Likewise

Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.

Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? but Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant of Judah perish?

But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten

men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah : and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.

And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it, that there came certain from Sechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hands, to bring them to the house of the LORD.

And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went : and it came to pass as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

And it was so when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him.

But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not : for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and
of

of honey. So he forbore, and slew them not among their brethren.

Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, was that which Afa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain.

Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done, then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon.

Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad.

So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.

But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs whom he had brought again from Gibeon :

And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt, because of the Chaldeans : for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon made governor in the land.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Ishmael was related to the royal family, and therefore formed a design to make himself king of the land. This is a certain proof, that he was an impious man; for had he feared the LORD, he would not have taken such a step immediately after the dreadful visitation which had fallen on the country; much less would he have entertained a thought of putting to death a worthy friend, who, conscious of his own integrity, and naturally of a benign and generous disposition, could not believe that one whom he had never injured, could harbour such treacherous intentions.

What could be more base, than to go with a band of assassins to the festive entertainment prepared for their refreshment, by hospitality and friendship, and murder the kind provider of the liberal repast? Such are the direful effects of ambition.

Ishmael

Ishmael was going to seek for reinforcement in the land of Ammon, when it pleased God to deliver him up to the punishment due to his atrocious wickedness.

Gedaliah's fate appears to have been very hard ; but we must remember, that there will be a state of future retribution.

S E C T. LIX.

JEREMIAH'S PROPHECY WHICH HE SPAKE TO THE MEN OF JUDAH THAT WERE LEFT IN THE LAND.

THEN all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near, And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplications be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant: for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:

That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you: Behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God, according to your words: and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.

Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even ac-

according to all things for thee which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the Lord came unto Jeremiah.

Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest.

And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him; If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you and not pull you down, and I will plant you and not pluck you up: for I delight not in bringing evil upon you.

Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God, Saying, No: but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

And



And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

Then it shall come to pass, that the sword which ye feared shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt, and the famine whereof ye were afraid shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there: they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach: and ye shall see this place no more.

The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your GOD, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our GOD: and according unto all that the LORD our GOD shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

And now I have this day declared it to you, but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your GOD, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.

Now therefore know certainly, that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go, and to sojourn.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find, that the infinite mercy of GOD would have been extended to the Jews, who remained in the land, if they would have reformed their lives, and submitted to the Divine commands; but notwithstanding they had seen desolation spread far and near, by famine, sword, and fire; and had greatly felt the effects of these calamities, which had been long threatened for the impiety and disobedience of the nation, they remained irreclaimable.

They pretended indeed, to be desirous of conducting themselves in conformity to the Divine will; but the generality of them were *insincere*, which occasioned the prophet to reprove them in the name of GOD, (who knoweth what passes in the secret recesses of the mind) for their abominable hypocrisy.

S E C T. LX.

JOHANAN, &c. DISCREDIT THE PROPHECY, AND
RESOLVE TO GO INTO EGYPT.

AND it came to pass that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people, all the words of the LORD their GOD, for which the
LORD

LORD their GOD had sent him to them, even all these words, Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our GOD hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there.

But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.

So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; even men and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan; and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.

So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD; thus came they, even to Tahpanhes.

Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpan-

hes, in the sight of the men of Judah: and say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts the GOD of Israel, Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid, and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death, to death; and such as are for captivity, to captivity; and such as are for the sword, to the sword.

And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives, and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment, and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is astonishing to read of the invincible obstinacy of the impious Jews; but what can reclaim those, who neither love or fear God, sufficiently to incline them to do their duty, which was the case with these abandoned people?

This section contains a remarkable prophecy, "foretelling by a type, the future conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar." "The image of Nebuchadnezzar arraying himself with Egypt as a shepherd puts on his garment, is very noble; Egypt at this time contended with Babylon for the empire of the East; yet this mighty kingdom, when God appointed the revolution

lution, was to shift its owner, with as much ease as a shepherd's tent or garment is changed, which the new proprietor has only to spread over him*."

* Dr. Smith's Summary View, &c.

S E C T. LXI.

THE PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH.

THE word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwelt in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel, Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation; and no man dwelleth therein.

Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, you, nor your fathers.

Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, O do not this abominable thing that I hate.

But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

Wherefore my fury, and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah, and
in

in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.

Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the GOD of hosts, the GOD of Israel: Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you, and before your fathers.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

And I will take the remnant of Judah that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land.

land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt, to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we and our fathers, our kings and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

But

But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine.

And when we burnt incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her without our men?

Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, The incense that ye burnt in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind?

So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed: therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse without an inhabitant, as at this day.

Because you have burnt incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies: therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt.

Thus

Thus saith the LORD of hosts the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt, Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah, in all the land of Egypt, saying, The LORD God liveth.

Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good, and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt, shall be consumed by the sword, and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

Yet a small number that escape the sword, shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah; and all the remnant of Judah that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine or theirs.

And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil.

Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life, as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar.

nezzar king of Babylon his enemy, and that fought his life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

One could scarcely have supposed, that any people would have acted in a manner so inconsistent with the light of reason, as to pay adoration to *inanimate things*; but for the Jews to do so, who had been so often favoured with Divine revelations, is quite astonishing; especially, after they had beheld such signal judgments inflicted on their country, and were so kindly invited to render themselves objects of mercy by repentance and obedience.

The queen of heaven, to whom the Israelites paid adoration, is supposed to have been the moon; it is needless to enlarge on the folly of idolizing this planet, as the absurdity of it is evident; every one must think those Jews who did so, were deserving of the punishments denounced against them.

Sacred history makes no mention of Jeremiah after this period; but it is most likely that he died in Egypt soon after. We find, in the collection of his prophecies, a number of predictions respecting other nations; against whom he was commanded to denounce the judgments of God for their wickedness, particularly the Philistines, Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites; he likewise foretold the *redemption of Israel*, of all which we shall take notice in a subsequent part of this history.

Now we have read of the destruction of Jerusalem, and the punishments inflicted on the remaining inhabitants of Judea, we must next look back to those who were carried captive into Babylon.

S E C T. LXII.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS THAT WERE
CARRIED CAPTIVE INTO BABYLON; PARTI-
CULARLY OF THE PROPHET DANIEL, AND
HIS FRIENDS, SHADRAC, MESHACH, AND
ABEDNEGO.

WHEN Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon first
besieged Jerusalem, the LORD gave Jehoia-
kim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the
vessels of the house of GOD, which he carried into the
land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he
brought the vessels into the treasure-house of his god.

And the king spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of
his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children
of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;
children in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured,
and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge,
and understanding science, and such as had ability in
them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they
might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chal-
deans.

And the king appointed them a daily provision, of
the king's meat, and of the wine which he drank:
so nourishing them three years, that at the end thereof
they might stand before the king.

Now among these were of the children of Judah,
Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: unto
whom

whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave unto Daniel the name of Belteshazzar; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

But Daniel purposed in his heart, that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs, that he might not defile himself.

Now God had brought Daniel into favour and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.

And the prince of the eunuchs said unto Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your meat and your drink: for why should he see your faces worse liking than the children which are of your sort? then shall ye make me endanger my head to the king.

Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days, and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.

Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenance of the children that eat of the portion of the king's meat: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.

So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.

And at the end of ten days, their countenances appeared

peared fairer, and fatter in flesh than all the children which did eat the portion of the king's meat.

Thus Melzar took away the portion of their meat, and the wine that they should drink: and gave them pulse.

As for these four children, GOD gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

Now at the end of the days that the king had said he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.

And the king communed with them, and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Misrael, and Azariah: therefore stood they before the king.

And in all matters of wisdom and understanding that the king enquired of them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and astrologers that were in all his realm.

And Daniel continued even unto the first year of king Cyrus.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prophet* Daniel, who was descended from the royal family of David, was carried away in the first captivity, (which happened in the reign of Jehoiakim, king of Judah) together with his friends Hananiah, Misrael, and Azariah. It† was at that time the custom among conquerors, to change the

* Stackhouse on the Bible.

† Calmet's Dictionary.

names of their captives. Those which were given to these four youths, had a relation to the idols of the Babylonians, as their former ones had to the true GOD. DANIEL, in the Hebrew tongue, signifies, *GOD is my judge*: BELTESHAZZAR, in the Chaldee, is, *the treasure of Baal*: HANANIAH, in Hebrew, *well pleasing to GOD*: SHADRACH, in Chaldee, *the inspiration of the sun*: MISHAEL, in Hebrew, *proceeding from GOD*: MESHACH, in Chaldee, *belonging to the goddess Shishac*: AZARIAH, in Hebrew, *GOD is my help*: ABED-NEGO, in Chaldee, the servant of *Nego*; that is, the *Sun* or the *Morning star*, both deities among the Babylonians, and so called because of their brightness.

The master of the eunuchs signifies, the person who had the controul of the king's household.

Daniel and his friends, though very young men, resolved steadfastly to adhere to the DIVINE LAW, and on no account to eat what that law prohibited to the Jews. They had* also, it is likely, another motive for refusing, which was the custom in most heathen nations of making an oblation to their gods, by pouring the liquor on the ground, and burning part of the meat, before they eat or drank, as an acknowledgment that all they had came from their bounty: so that every entertainment was a kind of sacrifice to idols, and therefore these pious youths looked upon what came from the king's table as *unclean*.

The learning† of the Chaldeans chiefly consisted in what they called astrology, (or a knowledge of the motions of the sun, moon, and stars) the art of building, and the art of war: these branches of knowledge the Jews might lawfully learn, and therefore we find the young captives made great proficiency in them; and GOD ordained that their knowledge, which he enabled them to acquire to such a degree, should become a mean of procuring them that prosperity, which he had

* Stackhouse.

† Ibid.

promised to those who should patiently endure their captivity, and preserve their principles from corruption in an idolatrous country. Some of the Chaldeans professed to have skill in *magical arts*, but this was all deception; had it been real, it is very unlikely they would be willing to communicate to the worshippers of the LORD JEHOVAH, that knowledge which they pretended to derive from *idols*; for they made a *mystery* of it, even to the generality of their own countrymen. So that we may be certain, *magic* was not amongst the sciences which Daniel and his companions were taught; neither would those who refused the meat from the king's table, have submitted to be instructed by what means they might obtain inspiration from false deities.

This section affords an excellent lesson to young persons, admonishing them to strive against all temptations, which are calculated to draw them from their duty to GOD.

S E C T. LXIII.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.

AND in the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, wherewith his spirit was troubled, and his sleep brake from him.

Then the king commanded to call the magicians, and the astrologers, and the forcerers, and the Chaldeans, for to shew the king his dreams. So they came and stood before the king.

And the king said unto them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.

Then

Then spake the Chaldeans to the king in Syriack,
O king, live for ever : tell thy servants the dream, and
we will shew the interpretation

The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The
thing is gone from me: if ye will not make known
unto me the dream with the interpretation thereof, ye
shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a
dunghill.

But if ye shew the dream, and the interpretation
thereof, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards, and
great honour: therefore shew me the dream, and the
interpretation thereof.

They answered again and said, Let the king tell his
servants the dream, and we will shew the interpretation
of it.

And the king answered and said, I know of certainty
that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing
is gone from me.

But if ye will not make known unto me the dream,
there is but one decree for you : for ye have prepared
lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the
time be changed : therefore tell me the dream, and I
shall know that ye can shew me the interpretation
thereof.

The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said,
There is not a man upon the earth that can shew the
king's matter: therefore there is no king, lord, nor
ruler, that asked such things at any magician, or astro-
loger, or Chaldean.

And

And it is a rare thing that the king requireth, and there is none other that can shew it before the king, except the gods whose dwelling is not with flesh.

For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise men of Babylon.

And the decree went forth that the wise men should be slain: and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.

Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, which was gone forth to slay the wise men of Babylon.

He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why is the decree so hasty from the king? then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.

Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would shew the king the interpretation.

Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah his companions; That they would desire mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret; that Daniel and his fellows should not perish with the rest of the wise men of Babylon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The SUPREME BEING, who had appointed Nebuchadnezzar to be *his servant*, in respect to the judgments which his infinite wisdom saw fit to bring on different nations for their

crimes, revealed unto him (in the visions of the night) what should happen afterwards; and that he might know it was not a common dream and disregard it, obliterated from his memory the particular circumstances of it; but impressed his mind with an earnest desire to recollect them, and to obtain, if possible, an interpretation.

Those who were distinguished by the denomination of *wise men*, had no knowledge beyond what may be acquired by human means, therefore it was utterly impossible for them to give the king any satisfaction. Nebuchadnezzar had not been accustomed to disappointment in his demands; and as some of the magicians had, on other occasions, pretended to supernatural skill, he condemned the whole body of them to instant death as a set of impostors.

S E C T. LXIV.

DANIEL'S THANKSGIVING.

THEN was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night-vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.

Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:

And he changeth the times and the seasons; he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding.

He

He revealeth the deep and secret things: he knoweth what is in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.

I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known unto me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast now made known unto us the king's matter.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whether Daniel was waking or asleep, when the vision was revealed to him, is a point of no importance to discuss.

His thanksgiving is deserving of particular attention; for it contains a lesson, which all, who are endued with superior wisdom, should engrave on their hearts, as it would effectually subdue that pride and arrogance, which too often accompany extraordinary knowledge. The wisdom which Daniel at that time obtained, was evidently *from above, and came down from the Father of lights* *. And what has the wisest of mankind, that is not originally derived from the same divine source. A man has, perhaps, spent a large portion of his time in the study of various sciences, and obtained such a share of knowledge, as lifts him far above the generality of his species, but the ability to pursue these researches was the gift of God; nay the very sciences themselves relate to the works of the CREATOR, and consequently the knowledge of their various properties, which is the foundation of science, must, in the first instance, have proceeded from the DEITY himself; who, by means of a secret *instinct*, unperceived by the mind, points out the *path* which *reason* then is able to pursue. I speak of what is termed the *first invention* of useful arts and sciences.

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If

If it is really true, that God alone giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to those who have understanding, and that light dwelleth in Him alone; surely it is the indispensable duty of every one, who possesses any degree of wisdom, to thank and praise God as Daniel did.

S E C T. LXV.

THE INTERPRETATION OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S DREAM.

THEN Daniel went in unto Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise men of Babylon: he went and said thus unto him, Destroy not the wise men of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and I will shew unto the king the interpretation.

Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus unto him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah that will make known unto the king the interpretation.

The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name was Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known unto me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation thereof?

Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded cannot the wise men, the astrologers, the magicians, the soothsayers shew unto the king.

But

But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream and the visions of thy head upon thy bed are these;

As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came into thy mind upon thy bed what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known unto thee what shall come to pass.

But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for any wisdom that I have more than any living, but for their sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mightest know the thoughts of thy heart.

Thou, O king, sawest, and behold, a great image. This great image, whose brightness was excellent, stood before thee; and the form thereof was terrible.

This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay.

Thou sawest till that a stone was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet that were of iron and clay, and brake them to pieces.

Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver and the gold broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth.

This is the dream : and we will tell the interpretation thereof before the king.

Thou, O king, art a king of kings : for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory.

And wheresoever the children of men dwell ; the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold.

And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth.

And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron : forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things : and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces, and bruise.

And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potters' clay and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided : but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with miry clay.

And as the toes of the feet were part of iron and part of clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly broken.

And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men : but they shall not cleave one to another, even as iron is not mixed with clay.

And

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces, and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever.

Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands, and that it brake in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold: the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream is certain, and the interpretation thereof sure.

Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face, and worshipped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odours unto him.

The king answered unto Daniel, and said, Of a truth it is that your God is a God of gods, and a LORD of kings, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldest reveal this secret.

Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon.

Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel sat in the gate of the king.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The prophecies of Daniel are astonishingly clear, and their dates very precisely marked.

The same observations may be applied to Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the interpretation of it, as were made on that of Pharaoh which Joseph explained. One circumstance indeed, renders this at first sight more wonderful than the Egyptian king's, which is, that Pharaoh was able to relate the particulars of his dream, but Nebuchadnezzar could recollect no more than that he had had a very significant dream, which left no farther impression on his mind, than an urgent desire to know its import.

Far from arrogating to himself the knowledge which had been so graciously and so wonderfully revealed, Daniel began with ascribing glory to the SUPREME BEING, and called upon the king of Babylon to regard the answer he was going to receive to his anxious enquiries, as coming from *Heaven*, and not as the result of human researches.

By the different *emblems of metals, and stones*, GOD intended to signify to Nebuchadnezzar, the *empires* that were to be in the world. The ASSYRIAN or Chaldean is represented by *gold*, because it was the first, and the most magnificent, if not the most extensive; and Nebuchadnezzar being then on the throne, is said to be the head of it. That of silver, is the PERSIAN; that of brass, the GRECIAN; that of iron, the ROMAN. The history of these successive empire shews the wonderful completion of these prophecies. By the kingdom which was *never to be destroyed*, was meant the kingdom of the MESSIAH.

Nebuchadnezzar readily acknowledged his conviction that Daniel was actually acquainted with his dream, which he now perfectly

perfectly recollected. Struck with astonishment at this amazing circumstance, he freely confessed, that Daniel's God, was *GOD of gods*, and *LORD of kings*; and he would even have paid divine honours to Daniel as His minister: Nebuchadnezzar was therefore inexcusable for continuing in idolatry, since the *LORD had revealed Himself to him*, and *furnished him with the means of information in respect to his duty*, for Daniel, without doubt, would have gladly instructed him: nothing therefore was wanting to compleat his conversion, but *a willing mind*.

S E C T. LXVI.

SHADRACH, MESHACH, AND ABEDNEGO WON-
DERFULLY DELIVERED.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof six cubits: he set it up in the plain of Dura in the province of Babylon.

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the countellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Ne-

buchadnezzar the king had set up, and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up.

Then an herald cried aloud, 'To you it is commanded, O people, nations and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down, and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.

Wherefore at that time certain Chaldeans came near, and accused the Jews.

They spake and said to the king, Nebuchadnezzar, O king live for ever.

'Thou, O king, hast made a decree that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: and whoso falleth not down and worshippeth, that he should be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.

There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, Shadrach, Meshach,

Meshach, and Abed-nego; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king.

Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up?

Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made, well; but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace: and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter.

If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver from the burning fiery furnace: and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.

Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach,

Mefhach, and Abed-nego: therefore he fpake and commanded that they fhould heat the furnace one feven times more than it was wont to be heated.

And he commanded the moft mighty men that were in his army to bind Shadrach, Mefhach, and Abed-nego, and to caft them into the burning fiery furnace.

Then thefe men were bound in their coats, their hofen, and their hats, and their other garments, and were caft into the midft of the burning fiery furnace.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The golden ftatue, which we here read of, was, including its pedeftal, thirty yards in height, and fupposed to have been dedicated by Nebuchadnezzar, to *Bel* his idol; though it is not improbable that it was rather an image of himfelf, to which he required divine honours to be paid.

This ambitious king feems to have forgot, in the profecution of his conquefts, the **ALMIGHTY GOD**, whose Supreme Power he formerly acknowledged.

The punifhment of being thrown into a burning fiery furnace, was ufual in Chaldea, and muft have been very dreadful; befides on this occafion it was heated to an uncommon degree.

How great muft have been the *faith* and *piety* of Shadrach, Mefhach, and Abednego, which enabled them to adhere to their duty, in defiance of the threats of Nebuchadnezzar, and the torments prepared for them.

S E C T. LXVII.

THE PRESERVATION OF SHADRACH, MESHACH,
AND ABED-NEGO.

THEN these three men fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

And they walked in the midst of the fire, praising God, and blessing the LORD.

Then Azarias stood up, and prayed on this manner; and opening his mouth in the midst of the fire said, Blessed art thou, O LORD GOD of our fathers : thy name is worthy to be praised, and glorified for evermore.

For thou art righteous in all the things that thou hast done to us : yea, true are all thy works, thy ways are right, and all thy judgments truth.

In all the things which thou hast brought upon us, and upon the holy city of our fathers, even Jerusalem, thou hast executed true judgment : for according to truth and judgment didst thou bring all these things upon us, because of our sins.

For we have sinned and committed iniquity, departing from thee.

In all things have we trespassed, and not obeyed thy commandments, nor kept them, neither done as thou hast commanded us, that it might go well with us.

Wherefore

Wherefore all that thou hast brought upon us, and every thing that thou hast done to us, thou hast done in true judgment.

And thou didst deliver us into the hands of lawless enemies, most hateful forsakers of GOD, and to an unjust king, and the most wicked in all the world.

And now we cannot open our mouths, we are become a shame and reproach to thy servants, and to them that worship thee.

Yet deliver us not up wholly, for thy name's sake, neither disannul thou thy covenant; And cause not thy mercy to depart from us, for thy beloved Abraham's sake, for thy servant Isaac's sake, and for thy holy Israel's sake;

To whom thou hast spoken and promised, That thou wouldst multiply their seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that lieth upon the sea-shore.

For we, O LORD, are become less than any nation, and be kept under this day in all the world because of our sins.

Neither is there at this time prince, or prophet, or leader, or burnt-offering, or sacrifice, or oblation, or incense, or place to sacrifice before thee, and to find mercy.

Nevertheless, in a contrite heart and an humble spirit let us be accepted.

Like as in the burnt-offerings of rams and bullocks, and like as in ten thousands of fat lambs: so let our sacrifice be in thy sight this day, and grant that we may wholly

wholly go after thee: for they shall not be confounded that put their trust in thee.

And now we follow thee with all our heart, we fear thee, and seek thy face.

Put us not to shame: but deal with us after thy loving kindness, and according to the multitude of thy mercies.

Deliver us also according to thy marvellous works, and give glory to thy name, O LORD: and let all them that do thy servants hurt, be ashamed; And let them be confounded in all their power and might, and let their strength be broken; And let them know that thou art LORD, the only GOD, and glorious over the whole world.

And the king's servants that put them in, ceased not to make the oven hot with rosin, pitch, tow, and small wood; So that the flame streamed forth above the furnace, forty and nine cubits.

And it passed through, and burnt those Chaldeans it found about the furnace.

But the angel of the LORD came down into the oven, together with Azarias and his fellows, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven: And made the midst of the furnace, as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them.

Then the three, as out of one mouth, praised, glorified, and blessed GOD in the furnace, saying, Blessed art thou, O LORD GOD of our fathers: and to be praised and exalted above all for ever.

Then

Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king.

He answered and said, Lo, I see, four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of the most high God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth of the midst of the fire.

And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants, that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God.

Therefore I make a decree, That every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss
against

against the GOD of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other god that can deliver after this sort.

Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a striking example does this section afford of the interposition of providence in favour of true and inflexible piety.

On this occasion, GOD literally fulfilled his promise by Isaiah; *when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt: neither shall the flame kindle upon thee* *.

It is supposed, that the LORD GOD manifested his glorious presence on this occasion, under a visible form.

Nebuchadnezzar was once more convinced of the omnipotence of the SUPREME BEING; happy would it have been for him, if he had, from this conviction, forsaken idolatry, and continued to worship the LORD GOD alone.

* Chap. xliii. 2.

S E C T. LXVIII.

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH, DESIGNED FOR THE COMFORT OF THE FAITHFUL PEOPLE OF GOD, UNDER THE PROSPECT OF CAPTIVITY, AND DURING ITS CONTINUANCE.

I. **A**ND it shall come to pass in the day that the LORD shall give thee rest from thy sorrow, and
from

from thy fear, and from the hard bondage wherein thou wast made to serve, that thou shalt take up this proverb against the king of Babylon, and say, How hath the oppressor ceased? the golden city ceased?

The LORD hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers.

He who smote the people in wrath with a continual stroke; he that ruled the nations in anger, is persecuted, and none hindereth.

II. Remember these, O Jacob and Israel; for thou art my servant; I have formed thee, thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me: I have blotted out as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me, for I have redeemed thee.

Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.

Thus saith the LORD thy Redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things, that stretcheth forth the heavens alone, that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself:

That frustrateth the tokens of the liars, and maketh diviners mad, that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish:

That confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers, that saith to
Jerusalem,

Jerusalem, Thou shalt be inhabited; and to the cities of Judah, Ye shall be built, and I will raise up the decayed places thereof:

That faith to the deep, Be dry, and I will dry up thy rivers:

That faith of Cyrus, He is my shepherd, and shall perform all my pleasure, even saying to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid.

III. Sing, O heavens, and be joyful, O earth, and break forth into singing, O mountains: for the LORD hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

But Zion said, The LORD hath forsaken me, and my LORD hath forgotten me.

Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee.

Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands, thy walls are continually before me.

Thy children shall make haste; thy destroyers, and they that made thee waste, shall go forth of thee.

IV. He that putteth his trust in me, shall possess the land, and shall inherit my holy mountain: and shall say, Cast ye up, cast ye up, prepare the way, take up the stumbling-block out of the way of my people.

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place; with him also that is of a contrite
and

and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth: for the spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.

For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart.

I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him, and to his mourners.

I create the fruit of the lips; peace, peace to him that is afar off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD, and I will heal him.

But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt.

There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked.

V. If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable, and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD, and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father; for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Every one of these extracts is worthy of particular examination *, but we must at present content ourselves with a cursory view, that the thread of the history may not be broken.

In the first of these extracts, deliverance from captivity is promised. In the second, the deliverer is expressly mentioned by name. In the third, the tender mercies of God towards his people are described in the most lively and pathetic terms. In the fourth, the prophet recommends trust in God, with whom the penitent and humble will find deliverance. In the fifth, a proper observance of the Sabbath is recommended. As this duty is of eternal obligation to all who call themselves God's people, and the breach of it a particular offence against God Himself, it behoves all to pay attention to a text, which points out the manner in which the LORD requires it to be observed. We here find that God expects the day to be appropriated entirely to his service, that all sensual pleasure and worldly concerns should be laid aside, and the sacred season employed in those holy exercises, which afford real and substantial delight to the soul. Whoever spends their Sabbath in this rational way, will certainly experience that inward satisfaction, which naturally springs from a consciousness of pleasing their Great CREATOR and GOVERNOR; and may justly expect through his mercy and goodness, the addition of temporal blessings also.

* The prediction relating to the Messiah, and the blessings of the gospel, are reserved for another part of this work.

S E C T. LXIX.

PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH RESPECTING THE
FUTURE RESTORATION OF GOD'S FAITHFUL
PEOPLE.

THUS saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them: and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

Thus

Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.

Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.

For there shall be a day that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our GOD.

For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame: a great company shall return thither.

They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first born.

Hear

Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd doth his flock.

For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The promises which compose this section, were delivered by Jeremiah at the same time that he was commissioned to denounce those dreadful threatnings, which were fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem. It is needless to observe, that they were mercifully calculated to support the hopes of those, who continued faithful to the LORD, or who were penitent for their sins. A variety of other consolatory passages might be selected from the rest of the prophets.

S E C T. LXX.

A PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL RELATING TO TYRE.

AND it came to pass in the eleventh year, in the first day of the month, that the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is broken that was the gates of the people: she is turned unto me, I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste: Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.

And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.

It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the LORD GOD, and it shall become a spoil to the nations.

And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword, and they shall know that I am the LORD.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.

He shall slay with the sword thy daughters in the field, and he shall make a fort against thee, and cast a mount against thee, and lift up the buckler against thee.

And he shall set engines of war against thy walls, and with his axes he shall break down thy towers.

By reason of the abundance of his horses, their dust shall cover thee, thy walls shall shake at the noise of the horsemen, and of the wheels, and of the chariots, when he shall enter into thy gates, as men enter into a city wherein is made a breach.

With the hoofs of his horses shall he tread down all thy streets; he shall slay thy people by the sword, and thy strong garrisons shall go down to the ground.

And they shall make a spoil of thy riches, and make a prey of thy merchandise, and they shall break down thy walls, and destroy thy pleasant houses, and they shall lay thy stones, and thy timber, and thy dust in the midst of the water.

And I will cause the noise of thy songs to cease, and the sound of thy harps shall be no more heard.

And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon: thou shalt be built no more: for I the LORD have spoken it, saith the LORD GOD.

Thus saith the LORD GOD to Tyrus, Shall not the isles shake at the sound of thy fall, when the wounded cry, when the slaughter is made in the midst of thee?

Then

Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes: and put off their broidered garments: they shall cloath themselves with trembling, they shall sit upon the ground, and shall tremble at every moment, and be astonished at thee.

And they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and say to thee, How art thou destroyed that wast inhabited of sea-faring men, the renowned city which wast strong in the sea, she and her inhabitants, which cause their terror to be on all that haunt it? Now shall the isles tremble in the day of thy fall; yea, the isles that are in the sea shall be troubled at thy departure.

For thus saith the LORD GOD, When I shall make thee a desolate city, like the cities that are not inhabited, when I shall bring up the deep upon thee, and great waters shall cover thee; When I shall bring thee down, with them that descend into the pit, with the people of old time, and shall set thee in the low parts of the earth, in places desolate of old, with them that go down to the pit, that thou be not inhabited, and I shall set glory in the land of the living:

I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the LORD GOD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This prophecy begins with introducing Tyre insulting Jerusalem on her fall, and congratulating herself on the prospect

of accession to her commerce, now that this city was no more. Upon which GOD denounces destruction to Tyre, and all the lesser cities dependant upon her. Nebuchadnezzar is named, as the person charged with this work, and his proceedings, and the fatal consequences of them, are described in the most lively colours.—At length, nothing remains of Tyre, but the bare rock on which it was built. Let us now see how this prediction was fulfilled.

S U P P L E M E N T.

About two years after the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar went again into Syria, and laid siege to Tyre. It was a strong and wealthy city, which had never yet submitted to any foreign empire, and was at that time famous for its traffick and merchandize; by which several of its inhabitants had enriched themselves to such a degree, that they were able to vie with princes in splendor and magnificence. It was built by the Zidonians, two hundred and forty years before the building of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar had great difficulties in subduing Tyre, which resisted him for thirteen years, but at length yielded to this mighty conqueror.

Before it came to this extremity, the inhabitants had removed their effects into an island about half a mile distant from the shore, and there built a new city; therefore, when Nebuchadnezzar entered, he found but little to reward his foldiers. In revenge he razed the town, and it never rose to be any thing more than a village afterwards; but the city in the island became famous under the name of *New Tyre*.

From the downfall of Tyre we learn, that it is great folly, as well as cruelty, for one nation to exult at the ruin of another; for, behold! the LORD maketh the earth empty; he scattereth

scattereth abroad all the inhabitants thereof; none are able to resist his power, when his judgements are gone forth to punish for iniquity.

Whilst Nebuchadnezzar lay at the siege of Tyre, Nebuzaradan, his general, being sent by him with part of his army, invaded the land of Israel, to take revenge, as is supposed, for the death of Gedaliah: in which expedition he carried away captive seven hundred and forty-five persons who remained in the land. Perhaps this small remnant had been restrained by the threatnings which Jeremiah denounced in the name of the **LORD**, against all those who should, in defiance of the divine command, go into Egypt; if so, we may regard their captivity as a *merciful* dispensation, since it proved the mean of their being comfortably settled with the rest of their brethren in Babylon; and preserved them from the repeated molestation which they had reason to expect from different quarters, if they remained defenceless in Judea. By this captivity was fully compleated the desolation of the land, no more of its former inhabitants being now left in it, and all the numerous prophecies concerning it were amply fulfilled.

S E C T. LXXI.

PROPHECY OF JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL CONCERNING THE AMMONITES.

BEHOLD, the days come, saith the **LORD**, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then

shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.

Howl, O Heshbon; for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth, lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his princes together.

Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valleys, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me?

Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee saith the LORD GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee: and ye shall be driven out every man right forth, and none shall gather up him that wandereth.

And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

And the LORD said unto Ezekiel, say unto the Ammonites, Hear the word of the LORD GOD; Thus saith the LORD GOD; Because thou saidst, Aha, against my sanctuary, when it was profaned; and against the land of Israel, when it was desolate; and against the house of Judah, when they went into captivity;

Behold, therefore I will deliver thee to the men of the east for a possession, and they shall set their palaces in thee, and make their dwellings in thee: they shall eat thy fruit, and they shall drink thy milk.

And

And I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the LORD.

For thus saith the LORD GOD; Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel;

Behold, therefore I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

These prophecies were remarkably fulfilled, for when Nebuzaradan had completed the desolation of Judea, he marched against the Ammonites, and having destroyed Rabbah, their royal city, and made great desolation by fire and sword in that country, he carried their king, princes, and most of the inhabitants into captivity. This was done by the Babylonish general, to revenge the part they had taken in the murder of Gedaliah; who at the same time that he punished the Ammonites for this crime in particular, inflicted those judgments which the prophets had foretold should fall on them for their idolatry and wickedness.

S E C T. LXXII.

PROPHECIES AGAINST MOAB, EDM, &c.

WE have heard of the pride of Moab; he is very proud; even of his haughtiness, and his pride and his wrath: but his lies shall not be so.

Therefore shall Moab howl for Moab, every one shall howl: for the foundations of Kir-harefeth shall ye mourn, surely they are stricken.

For the fields of Heshbon languish and the vine of Sibmah: the lords of the heathen have broken down the principal plants thereof, they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness; her branches are stretched out, they are gone over the sea.

Against Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled: Kiriathaim is confounded and taken; Misgab is confounded and dismayed.

There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.

A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.

Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.

For

For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up ; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

For because thou hast trusted in thy works and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken : and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.

And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape : the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken.

Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away : for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.

The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD.

Make ye him drunken ; for he magnified himself against the LORD. Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.

For was not Israel a derision unto thee ; was he found among thieves ? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.

We have heard the pride of Moab, he is exceeding proud : his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

I know his wrath, saith the LORD: but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it.

Moreover, I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods.

For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

There shall be lamentation generally upon all the house tops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD.

And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.

Fear and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.

He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare; for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon, because of the force; but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.

Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth; for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

Yet

Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgement of Moab.

Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent! is their wisdom vanished? Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan: for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.

If grape-gatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleanings? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

But I have made Esau bare, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren and his neighbours, and he is not.

Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgement was not to drink of the cup, have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it.

For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD: that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse: and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye

together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.

For lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.

Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill; though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.

As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong; but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD that he hath taken against Edom, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: surely the least of the flock shall draw them out, surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

The earth is moved at the noise of their fall: at the cry, the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea.

Behold,

Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah : and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in great anguish.

The burden of Damascus. Behold, Damascus is taken away from being a city, and it shall be a ruinous heap.

The cities of Aroer are forsaken : they shall be for flocks, which shall lie down, and none shall make them afraid.

The fortrefs also shall cease from Ephraim, and the kingdom from Damascus, and the remnant of Syria : they shall be as the glory of the children of Israel, saith the LORD of hosts.

The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

Thus saith the LORD ; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein ; the city, and them that dwell therein : then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands ; Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth : for the LORD will spoil the Philistines, the remnant of the country of Caphtor.

Baldness

Baldness is come upon Gaza, Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be 'ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.

How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.

For Gaza shall be forsaken, and Ashkelon a desolation: they shall drive out Ashdod at the noon day, and Ekron shall be rooted up.

Woe unto the inhabitants of the sea-coasts, the nation of the Cherethites! the word of the LORD is against you: O Canaan, the land of the Philistines, I will even destroy thee, that there shall be no inhabitant.

And the sea-coasts shall be dwellings and cottages for shepherds, and folds for flocks.

And the coast shall be for the remnant of the house of Judah; they shall feed thereupon: in the houses of Ashkelon shall they lie down in the evening: for the LORD their GOD shall visit them, and turn away their captivity.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The foregoing prophecies are supposed to have been accomplished during the siege of Tyre. They serve to shew the wonderful prescience of the ALMIGHTY, and point out the great offence of the heathen nations, namely, a presumptuous opposition to the LORD GOD.

S E C T .

S E C T. LXXIII.

PROPHECIES OF JEREMIAH AND EZEKIEL
AGAINST EGYPT.

THUS saith the LORD; Behold, I will give Pharaoh-hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life: as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon his enemy, that sought his life.

In the tenth year, in the tenth month, in the twelfth day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel, saying, Son of man, set thy face against Pharaoh king of Egypt, and prophesy against him, and against all Egypt.

Speak and say, Thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself.

But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales, and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales.

And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers, thou shalt fall upon the open fields, thou shalt not be brought together,

gether, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field and to the fowls of the heaven.

And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.

When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break and rend all their shoulder; and when they leaned upon thy breast and made all their loins to be at a stand.

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, I will bring a sword upon thee, and cut off man and beast out of thee.

And the land of Egypt shall be desolate and waste; and they shall know that I am the LORD: because he hath said, The river is mine and I have made it.

Behold, therefore I am against thee, and against thy river, and I will make the land of Egypt utterly waste and desolate, from the tower of Syene even unto the border of Ethiopia.

No foot of man shall pass through it, nor foot of beast shall pass through it, neither shall it be inhabited forty years.

And I will make the land of Egypt desolate in the midst of the countries that are desolate, and her cities among the cities that are laid waste shall be desolate forty years: and I will scatter the Egyptians among the nations, and will disperse them through the countries.

Yet thus saith the LORD GOD; At the end of forty years will I gather the Egyptians from the people whither

whither they were scattered: And I bring again the captivity of Egypt, and will cause them to return into the land of Pathros, into the land of their habitation; and they shall be there a base kingdom.

It shall be the basest of the kingdoms, neither shall it exalt itself any more above the nations: for I will diminish them that they shall no more rule over the nations.

And it shall be no more the confidence of the house of Israel, which bringeth their iniquity to remembrance, when they shall look after them: but they shall know that I am the LORD GOD.

And it came to pass in the seven and twentieth year, in the first month, in the first day of the month, the word of the LORD came unto Ezekiel, saying, Son of man, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled; yet had no wages nor his army for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it:

Therefore thus saith the LORD GOD; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army.

I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for me, saith the LORD GOD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By this prophecy, which was revealed to Ezekiel during the siege of Tyre, we may learn, that Nebuchadnezzar (though he knew it not) was the *servant of the LORD*, in respect to the destruction of the different nations. They were *presumptuous sinners*, and therefore *objects of divine wrath*: he was *ambitious*, therefore a *fit instrument of their chastisement*.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Immediately after the siege of Tyre, the king of Babylon taking advantage of the intestine divisions in Egypt, marched with his army thither, over-ran the whole land, and made miserable devastation; slew multitudes of its inhabitants, and reduced the country to such a ruinous state, that it did not recover for forty years afterwards. Nebuchadnezzar having loaded himself and his army with the rich spoils of this country, and brought it into subjection to him, he came to terms with Amasis, who had revolted from Pharaoh-Hophra, and usurped the throne; and having confirmed him in the kingdom as his deputy, Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon.

During this ravage of the land of Egypt, most of the Jews who had fled thither after the murder of Gedaliah, fell into the hands of the Babylonians; many of them they slew, others they took prisoners; the few that escaped, saved themselves by fleeing out of Egypt into different countries. After Nebuchadnezzar was gone out of Egypt, Pharaoh-Hophra, collecting together an army of foreigners, marched against Amasis, and gave him battle; in which being vanquished and taken prisoner, he was carried to his own palace in the city

city of Sais, and there strangled. By these events were completed all the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, concerning him and his people; particularly that of Jeremiah respecting his death. It is said of this prince, by a heathen writer, that in the pride of his heart he vaunted, that *it was not in the power of God himself to dispossess him of his kingdom*; which agrees with what Ezekiel charged him with, his saying *that the river was his, &c.*

Egypt continued in subjection to the Babylonian yoke till that empire fell; and it has been a base and mean nation ever since; for in the space of more than two thousand years, Egypt has produced nothing great, either in learning, wisdom, or exploit. It has been a tributary kingdom, without a prince of its own, but always subject to slaves or foreigners.—The Egyptians are possessed with a notion, that it is decreed by fate that slaves must always rule, and the natives be subject. From whence could such an idea first proceed, but from the promulgation of this prophecy, and its wonderful completion?

There are many other predictions concerning Egypt, among the writings of the prophets, but the examination of them would detain us too long from the history.

Nebuchadnezzar being now at rest from all his wars, and in full peace at home, applied himself to the finishing of his buildings at Babylon. He increased the magnificence of the city to such a degree, that it became one of the wonders of the world.

For a long succession of years, Nebuchadnezzar experienced scarcely any thing but success and exaltation. Prosperity had the effect it usually has on irreligious minds; for it made him proud and arrogant to the greatest degree; but the LORD, knowing that he was not incorrigibly wicked, sent afflictions to teach him (and the world by his example) how mean and abject the highest monarch is, in comparison of the SUPREME BEING.

The

The following section contains Nebuchadnezzar's own account of the exemplary judgment that was inflicted on him, which is preserved among the prophecies of Daniel.

S E C T. LXXIV.

DANIEL INTERPRETS NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S
DREAM.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the king, unto all people, nations, and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you.

I thought it good to shew the signs and wonders that the high God hath wrought toward me.

How great are his signs! and how mighty are his wonders! his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion is from generation to generation.

I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in mine house, and flourishing in my palace: I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed, and the visions of my head troubled me.

Therefore made I a decree, to bring in all the wise men of Babylon before me, that they might make known unto me the interpretation of the dream.

Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the sooth-sayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known unto me the interpretation thereof.

But

But at the last Daniel came in before me (whose name was Belteshazzar, according to the name of my God, and in whom is the spirit of the holy gods) and before him I told the dream, saying, O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the spirit of the holy gods is in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation thereof.

Thus were the visions of mine head in my bed; I saw, and behold, a tree in the midst of the earth, and the height thereof was great.

The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth.

The leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it.

I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a watcher, and an holy one came down from heaven.

He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit; let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches.

Nevertheless, leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth.

Let

Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him, and let seven times pass over him.

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know, that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.

This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen: now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation thereof, forasmuch as all the wise men of my kingdom are not able to make known unto me the interpretation: but thou art able, for the spirit of the holy gods is in thee.

Then Daniel (whose name was Belteshazzar) was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him: the king spake, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation thereof, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered, and said, My Lord the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation thereof to thine enemies.

The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose height reached unto the heaven, and the sight thereof to all the earth; whose leaves were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of the heaven had their habitation:

It

It is thou, O king, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown and reacheth unto heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.

And whereas the king saw a watcher, and an holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it, yet leave the stump of the roots thereof in the earth, even with a band of iron and brags in the tender grass of the field, and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts of the field, till seven times pass over him;

This is the interpretation, O king, and this is the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king: that they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, till thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree-roots; thy kingdom shall be sure unto thee, after that thou shalt have known that the heavens do rule.

Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity.

All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar.

At

At the end of twelve months, he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon.

The king spake, and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?

While the word was in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, saying, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken, The kingdom is departed from thee.

And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grafs as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.

The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar, and he was driven from men, and did eat grafs as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagle's feathers, and his nails like bird's claws.

And at the end of the days, I Nebuchadnezzar lift up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation.

And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the
army

army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

At the same time my reason returned unto me, and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me: and my counsellors and my lords fought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me.

Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the KING of HEAVEN, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment, and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The beginning of this section is a royal edict, published by Nebuchadnezzar himself, to acknowledge the supremacy of the High and Mighty God.

How wonderful were the dispensations of Divine Providence, towards this famous monarch, who, in the power of the SUPREME GOVERNOR, went forth to punish those nations, who had filled up the measure of their iniquity!

This section is particularly calculated to suppress the pride of princes, by teaching them that their being exalted over their fellow-creatures, is no invariable sign that they are the peculiar favourites of heaven, or possessed of extraordinary worth; for sometimes the MOST HIGH setteth up the basest of mankind, especially when he means to employ them as scourges to wicked nations.

It likewise contains an excellent admonition to such princes as have provoked Divine justice by the enormity of their own

conduct.—The most effectual measure they can pursue, in order to prolong their tranquility, is *to break off their sins by righteousness, and their iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor.*

How it came about, that Nebuchadnezzar did not apply first to Daniel, is uncertain; but we may suppose the prophet was absent from Babylon at that time, and the king imagined the magicians could interpret for him, as he was able to relate the dream to them. Daniel's exposition is very easy to be understood; by the *watcher* or *holy one*, is supposed to be meant an angel. Nebuchadnezzar is thought to have been seized with sudden distraction of mind; and during its continuance, to have been in a most deplorable state, unfit for the society or converse of mankind, and levelled with the beasts who have no understanding. Whether he actually eat grass, or was restrained to a vegetable diet, is uncertain; but from the Scripture account of the extraordinary growth of his hair and nails, it is likely that he wandered from home in desert places, till his reason was restored; at which time he is supposed to have returned to his kingdom, when his son, who had governed in his stead, resigned the throne to him, and his nobles gladly received him again, as he was honoured and respected by them. Nebuchadnezzar is said to have lived a year afterwards: he reigned between forty-three and forty-four years.

From Nebuchadnezzar's own words, we may conclude, that he at length became a convert to the LORD, the only true GOD. Various means had been employed to engage him to leave his idolatrous practices, and they proved at last effectual: he had, therefore, reason to bless the LORD for his humiliation, as in all probability it proved the means of saving his soul from perdition.

On the death of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach, his son, succeeded to the kingdom of Babylon.

S E C T. LXXV.

THE KINDNESS OF EVIL-MERODACH TO JEHOIACHIN KING OF JUDAH.

AND it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the seven and twentieth day of the month, that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign did lift up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah out of prison;

And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon;

And changed his prison garments: and he did eat bread continually before him all the days of his life.

And his allowance was a continual allowance given him of the king, a daily rate for every day, all the days of his life.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Whether this reverse of fortune in the Jewish monarch was sent as a reward for his penitence we are not told; but it is agreeable to the usual dispensations of Providence to suppose, this was the case; nothing farther is said of Jehoiachin by the sacred historian, therefore, it is imagined, that he died soon after.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Upon the death of Jehoiachin, Salathiel his son became the nominal prince of the Jews in his stead; for after the loss of their authority, they still kept up the title; and for a great many years there was always one of the house of David, who was honoured and acknowledged as a prince, under the name of the *head of the captivity*. They had some kind of jurisdiction consistent with the government they were under; which was sometimes ratified and confirmed by the kings of that country.

When Evil-merodach had reigned two years in Babylon, his crimes made him so hateful, that at length even his own relations conspired against him, and put him to death. Neriglissar, his sister's husband, who was at the head of this conspiracy, reigned in his stead.

In the same year that Evil-merodach was slain, died Astyages king of Media. He was succeeded by his son Darius, who divided his authority with Cyrus, the son of Cambysis, king of Persia, and Mandane, the daughter of Astyages. Cyrus at this time was forty years of age, and Darius was forty-one. This Prince is called, in profane history, Cyaxares.

Neriglissar, king of Babylon, on his coming to the crown, made great preparations for a war with the Medes. Darius gaining intelligence of this, sent for Cyrus out of Persia to his assistance, and on his arrival with thirty thousand Persians, Darius made him general of the Medes, and sent him with the joint forces of both nations, to make war against Neriglissar. From this time Cyrus was reckoned king over both nations, though he was in reality no more than commander in chief of the confederate army under the king of Media; but after the death of this monarch, he succeeded to his crown,

crown, as he did to his father's in the kingdom of Persia; which, with the countries he had conquered, made up the Persian empire, of which he was the founder and first monarch.

It has already been shewn, that Cyrus was appointed by the LORD to restore Israel to their native land; Isaiah, many years before, prophesied of him by name. It has also been shewn, that in order to keep up the spirits of the people whilst in captivity, encourage their faith and trust in God, and preserve them from idolatrous practices, the LORD graciously revealed to them, at different times, by means of his prophets, that he would, at the end of seventy years, bring them back to Judea; that they should rebuild their city, and once more be in a prosperous condition. It was likewise predicted that Babylon should be subdued, as it had subdued other nations: these prophecies are very remarkable, and may be seen in the following section.

S E C T. LXXVI.

PREDICTIONS RELATING TO THE DOWNFALL OF BABYLON.

THUS saith the LORD to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I have holden to subdue nations before him, and I will loose the loins of kings; to open before him the two leaved gates, and the gates shall not be shut;

I will go before thee, and make the crooked places straight: I will break in pieces the gates of brass, and cut in sunder the bars of iron:

And I will give thee the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that thou mayest know that I the LORD, which call thee by thy name, am the God of Israel.

For Jacob my servant's sake, and Israel mine elect, I have even called thee by thy name: I have surnamed thee, though thou hast not known me.

I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no god beside me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known me:

That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside me. I am the LORD, and there is none else.

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil. I the LORD do all these things.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We shall soon see that this prediction was literally and circumstantially fulfilled. The prophecy relating to Cyrus was uttered near 200 years before he was born into the world, and has justly engaged the attention of heathens, as well as Christians. How admirably is the divine prescience, displayed in every page of the prophetic writings!

S U P P L E M E N T.

Cyrus was a very extraordinary person in the age he lived in, renowned for wisdom, valour, and virtue; but his greatest encomium is, that he was thought worthy by the LORD to dispense his blessings to the house of Jacob. Neriglissar hearing

ing that Cyrus was coming against him with a very great army to the assistance of the Medes, sent ambassadors to Lydia, and other nations, to call them to his aid; after both parties had been for three years forming alliances, and making preparations for war, they, with their confederates, took the field. Neriglissar was slain, the Assyrian army routed, and Cyrus gained the victory.

Cræsus, king of Lydia, being next in dignity, took the command of the vanquished army, and made as good a retreat with it as he possibly could; but Cyrus overtook them, and entirely routed them, upon which Cræsus made the best of his way into his own country.

The death of Neriglissar was a great loss to the Babylonians, for he was a very learned and excellent prince.

Laborosoarchod, his son, succeeded him; he was in every thing the reverse of his father, and addicted himself to all kinds of wickedness, cruelty, and injustice. Cyrus gained great advantages during the reign of this king, who was killed about nine months after he came to the crown by the conspiracy of his own people. After him succeeded Belshazzar, who is supposed to have been grandson to Nebuchadnezzar, and son to Evil-merodach. He was very young when he ascended the throne, and of a dissolute turn of mind; but his mother Nitocris was a woman of excellent understanding, and a masculine spirit; therefore whilst her son devoted himself entirely to his pleasures, she undertook the principal part of the government, and did all that human prudence could suggest for the preservation of the kingdom. Nitocris used her utmost endeavours to fortify the country against the Medians; but Cyrus made great progress in taking fortresses, towns, and provinces; therefore the king of Babylon went into Lydia, and there formed a considerable confederacy by hiring auxiliary forces, over which he appointed Cræsus general, who went against the enemy; but Cyrus put him to flight,

and he returned to Sardis, where the conqueror closely besieged him, and after a short time took the city, made him prisoner, and condemned him to death, but was induced by compassion to spare his life. Cyrus was so successful in arms, that he conquered several other nations; and having greatly enlarged his dominions, again entered Assyria, and marched on towards Babylon, that being the only place in the east which held out against him; and having overthrown Belshazzar in a battle, shut him up in his capital: this happened in the sixteenth year of Belshazzar's reign. The Babylonian empire was now drawing to a conclusion, and the judgments of God ready for execution. Before we proceed with the history, it will be proper to read some of the predictions concerning this remarkable revolution.

S E C T. LXXVII.

PREDICTIONS CONCERNING BABYLON, DESIGNED
AS WARNINGS TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD WHO
DWELT THERE, TO ESCAPE FROM THENCE
BEFORE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE CITY.

THUS saith the LORD: Behold, I will raise up
against Babylon, and against them that dwell
in the midst of them that rise up against me, a de-
stroying wind;

And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan
her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trou-
ble they shall be against her round about.

Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his
bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his
brigandine: and spare ye not her young men: destroy
ye utterly all her host.

Thus

Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets.

For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his GOD, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.

Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD's vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

In those days and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their GOD.

They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from mountain to hill, they have forgotten their resting place.

All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not; because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice; even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the lands of the Chaldeans, and be as the he goats before the flocks.

And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed

up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour; and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

Therefore, behold, the days come that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

We are confounded, because we have heard reproach; shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD's house.

Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images, and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How gracious was the LORD, in thus giving intimation of his designs, that his faithful people might escape, and not be involved in the ruin of Babylon! From this circumstance it evidently appears, that their being sent into captivity was a *mercy*, and that his *chastisements* of them differed from *judgments*, as being designed to *amend* and not to *destroy* *. In this manner GOD still continues to act towards his servants, correcting them like a tender father, only to make them fit objects of his mercy and loving-kindness.

* Isaiah chap. xxvii. 7. &c.

S E C T. LXXVIII.

PROPHECIES RELATING TO THE FALL OF BABYLON.

FOR lo, I will raise, and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence he shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man: none shall return in vain.

And Chaldea shall be a spoil; all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.

Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat, as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls;

Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the LORD GOD of hosts: for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee.

And the most proud shall stumble, and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

Their Redeemer is strong; The LORD of hosts is his name; he shall thoroughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men.

A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men and they shall be dismayed.

A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.

Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the
owls

owls shall dwell therein : and it shall be no more inhabited for ever ; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

As GOD overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD ; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

They shall hold the bow and the lance : they are cruel, and will not shew mercy ; their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array like a man to the battle against, thee, O daughter of Babylon.

The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble : anguish took hold of him.

Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong : but I will make them suddenly run away from her : and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her ? for who is like me ? and who will appoint me the time ? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me ?

Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD that he hath taken against Babylon, and his purposes that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans : surely the least of the flock shall draw them out :
surely

surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them.

At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

Behold, I will stir up the Medes against them, which shall not regard silver; and as for gold, they shall not delight in it.

And Babylon the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees' excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah.

I was wroth with my people, I have polluted mine inheritance, and given them into thine hand: thou didst shew them no mercy; upon the ancient hast thou very heavily laid thy yoke.

And thou saidst, I shall be a lady for ever; so that thou didst not lay these things to thy heart, neither didst remember the latter end of it.

Therefore hear now this, thou that art given to pleasures, that dwellest carelessly, that sayest in thine heart, I am, and none else beside me; I shall not sit as a widow, neither shall I know the loss of children:

But these two things shall come to thee in a moment in one day; the loss of children, and widowhood: they shall come upon thee in their perfection for the multitude of thy forceries, and for the great abundance of thine enchantments.

For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness: thou hast said, None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge

knowledge, it hath perverted thee : and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none else besides me.

Therefore shall evil come upon thee ; thou shalt not know from whence it riseth : and mischief shall fall upon thee ; thou shalt not be able to put it off : and desolation shall come upon thee suddenly, which thou shalt not know.

Stand now with thine enchantments, and with the multitude of thy forceries, wherein thou hast laboured from thy youth ; if so be thou shalt be able to profit, if so be thou mayest prevail.

Thou art wearied in the multitude of thy counsels. Let now the astrologers, the star-gazers, the monthly prognosticators stand up, and save thee from these things that shall come upon thee.

Behold, they shall be as stubble ; the fire shall burn them ; they shall not deliver themselves from the power of the flame ; there shall not be a coal to warm at, nor fire to sit before it.

Thus shall they be unto thee with whom thou hast laboured, even thy merchants from thy youth : they shall wander every one to his quarter ; none shall save thee.

O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men as with caterpillers ; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

He

He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens ; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth : he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

Every man is brutish by his knowledge : every founder is confounded by the graven image : for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

They are vanity, the work of errors : in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

And I will render unto Babylon, and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, all their evil that they have done in Zion, in your sight, saith the LORD.

Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth : and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations ; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.

Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.

For

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the GOD of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshing floor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

These predictions are selected from the prophecies of Isaiah and Jeremiah: those of the first were written 130 years before the captivity of Judah, when the Medes were a very inconsiderable people, forming only a province of the Assyrian empire.

We find from these prophecies, that one principal cause for which GOD determined to send such signal judgments on the Babylonians, was, that he foresaw they would abuse the power he should put into their hands, and insult over those whom he should still consider as his people.—This does not seem to have been the case so much under the first kings of Babylon, to whom the Jews were in subjection; but it will appear to have been very particularly so, in respect to the last, who was suffered to reign. This, indeed, was not the only crime which the LORD foresaw the Babylonians would be guilty of: Divine prescience perceived a number of others, which would contribute to fill the measure of their iniquity, particularly that of idolatry.

S E C T. LXXIX.

THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD OF HOSTS CONCERNING THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON.

PUT yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land,

Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod; waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the LORD GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

Come against her from the utmost border, open her store houses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.

Slay

Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the day of their visitation.

Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

Make bright the arrows; gather the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes; for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Mini, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her, cause the horses to come up as the rough caterpillers.

Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

How awful it is to read these commands of the LORD of Hosts, to assemble the forces destined for his service in the destruction of Babylon! The description is so lively, that it is needless to comment on it.

S E C T. LXXX.

OTHER PREDICTIONS RESPECTING BABYLON.

AND the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

The mighty men of Babylon have forborne to fight, they have remained in their holds; their might hath failed, they became as women: they have burned her dwelling-places; her bars are broken.

One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon, that his city is taken at one end,

And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep

sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.

And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the king, whose name is The LORD of hosts.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The circumstances mentioned in this section, were literally fulfilled, as we shall shortly read. It will be proper to recal the attention of the reader to Belshazzar, whom we left closely besieged in Babylon.

S E C T. LXXXI.

THE REIGN OF BELSHAZZAR.

BELSHAZZAR the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.

Belshazzar,

Belshazzar, whilst he tasted the wine, commanded to bring the golden and silver vessels, which his father Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink therein.

Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which was at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

They drank wine, and praised the gods of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone.

In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaister of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote.

Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another.

The king cried out to bring in the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the soothsayers. And the king spake, and said to the wise men of Babylon, Whosoever shall read this writing, and shew me the interpretation thereof, shall be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Then

Then came in all the king's wife men : but they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation thereof.

Then was king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.

Now the queen, by reason of the words of the king and his lords, came into the banquet-house : and the queen spake, and said, O king, live for ever : let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed :

There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom is the spirit of the holy gods ; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him ; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, I say, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, and soothsayers :

Forasmuch as an excellent spirit and knowledge and understanding, interpretation of dreams, and shewing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, were found in the same Daniel, whom the king named Belshazzar. Now let Daniel be called, and he will shew the interpretation.

Then was Daniel brought in before the king. And the king spake and said unto Daniel, Art thou that Daniel which art of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Jewry ?

I have

I have heard of thee that the spirit of the gods is in thee, and that light and understanding and excellent wisdom is in thee.

And now the wise men, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known unto me the interpretation thereof; but they could not shew the interpretation of the thing:

And I have heard of thee that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation thereof, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and have a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be the third ruler in the kingdom.

Then Daniel answered and said before the king, Let thy gifts be to thyself, and give thy rewards to another: yet I will read the writing unto the king, and make known to him the interpretation thereof.

O thou king, the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honour:

And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew, and whom he would he kept alive, and whom he would he set up, and whom he would he put down.

But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:

And

And he was driven from the sons of men, and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling was with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till he knew that the most high God ruled in the kingdom of men, and that he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.

And thou, his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thine heart, though thou knewest all this:

But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven, and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou and thy lords, thy wives and concubines, have drunk wine in them, and thou hast praised the gods of silver and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified:

Then was the part of the hand sent from him, and this writing was written.

And this is the writing that was written; MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.

This is the interpretation of the thing: MENE; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it.

TEKEL; thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.

PERES; thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.

Then commanded Belshazzar, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and put a chain of gold about

his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It has already been observed that Belshazzar was both a weak and a wicked prince, and he certainly deserved that character; for what wise king would have been revelling and feasting, when his city and kingdom were on the very brink of ruin? and what wickedness could exceed the sacrilegious act he committed, in profaning the sacred vessels in so contemptuous a manner? short was the triumph of his impious mirth! the sentence of condemnation appeared in legible characters, and struck his guilty mind with astonishment and terror, even before he knew the purport of them.

Daniel, it is probable, (having received no particular command from the LORD to go to Belshazzar) kept at a distance from this scene of riot and profaneness; perhaps he was gone to rest, or engaged in prayer; or he might, though reckoned among the *wise men*, stay away, as the king sent only for the *magicians* and *astrologers*.

The queen, who entered the banqueting-room, was Nitocris, the king's mother, who was called *queen* by way of eminence, because she had the management of the kingdom; Belshazzar being so entirely inattentive to it, that he did not even know Daniel, though he was one of the ministers of state; but Nitocris, who constantly employed him, knew him well; and perhaps, it was by his advice, that she governed with so much wisdom and prudence, and preserved the kingdom to her son for so many years.

SECT.

S E C T. LXXXII.

THE FALL OF BABYLON.

AND the LORD as he had promised, held the right hand of Cyrus to subdue nations before him, He went before him to break in pieces the gates of brass, and to cut in sunder the bars of iron.

To give him the treasures of darkness, and hidden riches of secret places, that Cyrus might know, that the LORD who called him by his name was the God of Israel.

The LORD frustrated the tokens of the liars, and made diviners mad, He turned wise men backward, and made their knowledge foolish.

He confirmed the words of his servants, and performed the counsel of his messengers.

He said to the deep, Be dry, and dried up the river of Babylon.

One post ran to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon, that his city was taken at one end.

That the passages were stopped, and the reeds burnt with fire, and the men of war affrighted.

The mighty men of Babylon forbore to fight, they remained in their strong holds, their might failed, they became as women.

Her princes, her wise men, her captains, and her rulers were drunken ; they fell into a perpetual sleep, from which they never awaked, for the king whose name is the LORD of Hosts had ordained it.

The broad walls of Babylon were utterly broken, her high gates were burnt with fire, the people laboured in vain, and the folk in the fire, till they were weary, for in that night was Belshazzar the king of the Chaldeans taken and slain.

And Darius the Median took the kingdom, being about threescore and two years old.

Bel bowed down, Nebo stooped ; they could not deliver their people, they themselves went into captivity.

Come and sit down in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon, sit on the ground, there is no throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans, thou shalt no more be called tender and delicate. Thou shalt no more be called the Lady of Kingdoms* !

* It will be perceived, that I have taken a liberty with the text in this section ; but as it appears even from heathen authors, that the circumstances predicted by the prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah, were literally fulfilled, I thought there would be no impropriety in changing the tenses, so as to make them the historians of this wonderful event.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The foregoing section is the prophetic account of the taking of the famous city of Babylon ; no other narration is given of it in sacred writ, nor was any necessary, because there is no reason

reason to doubt, but that what the LORD said *should* come to pass, actually *did so*; and indeed the completion of the predictions of the prophets, is strongly confirmed by the relation given by heathen authors.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Herodotus and Xenophon, two ancient writers, inform us that Cyrus found the siege of Babylon a very difficult work at first, for the walls were high and impregnable, the city was well furnished with men, and fully supplied with all kinds of provisions for twenty years, as they had a great deal of void grounds within their walls, both for pasture and tillage; and therefore the inhabitants thinking themselves secure, defied and derided Cyrus from their bulwarks. However, he persisted for nearly two years, till at length gaining intelligence that a great annual festival was to be kept in Babylon, on which it was usual for the Babylonians to spend the whole night in drunkenness and riot; he thought it a proper time to surprize them, which he did, by breaking down a dam that was between the river, and a famous canal; by which means he drained off the water, so that the river soon became fordable, and two parties of soldiers marching by the channel of it, and finding the gates open, they entered and advanced to the palace, where they slew the king. The inhabitants soon yielded to the conqueror, and Cyrus became master of the place, and thus concluded his conquests, after a war of twenty one years. His victories were so extensive, that his empire was the greatest that had ever been in Asia; and to the honour of Cyrus it is related, that he conquered still more by his humanity and courtesy, than by his sword.

Thus ended the Babylonish empire, after it had continued from the reign of Nabonassar 200 years, just 50 years after Nebu-

chadnezzar destroyed the Temple at Jerusalem. The *head of Gold*, which Nebuchadnezzar dreamt of, was now broken to pieces, according to the prediction of Daniel* ; and the stone (cut out without hands) which smote it, became a great mountain as he foretold.

Cyrus, as long as his uncle lived, allowed him a joint title in the empire, and yielded him the first place of honour in it, though he was the principal agent under divine Providence in obtaining it ; Cyaxares accordingly was called *King*, and distinguished by the name of Darius the Median.

After Cyrus had settled his affairs in Babylon, he went to Persia ; and in his return through Media married the daughter of Darius the Median ; Darius then accompanied him to Babylon ; on their arrival, they took counsel together for the settling of the whole empire.

* Daniel, ch. ii.

S E C T. LXXXIII.

HISTORY OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE UNDER THE JOINT GOVERNMENT OF DARIUS AND CYRUS.

IT pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes which should be over the whole kingdom ;

And over these three presidents ; of whom Daniel was first : that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.

Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him ;
and

and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.

Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him.

Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God.

Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever.

All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any god or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions.

Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not.

Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.

Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house: and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God.

Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king's decree. Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? the king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians which altereth not.

Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day.

Then the king when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and he set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.

Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, know O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, that no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed.

Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee.

And a stone was brought and laid upon the mouth of the den, and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.

Then

Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night in fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him, and his sleep went from him.

Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.

And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel; and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God whom thou servest continually able to deliver thee from the lions!

Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.

My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.

Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God.

And the king commanded, and they brought those men which had accused Daniel, and they cast them into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives: and the lions had the mastery of them, and brake all their bones in pieces, or ever they came to the bottom of the den.

Then king Darius wrote unto all the people, nations and languages that dwell in all the earth, Peace be multiplied unto you.

I make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom, men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel; for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall never be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.

He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.

So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Daniel was renowned throughout the east country for his wisdom; and, having great experience, was certainly a very proper person for the high office he was appointed to. He had been employed full sixty-five years as prime minister under the kings of Babylon: the high station of chief of the presidents, placed him next to the king in dignity. Cyrus was gone to settle some affairs in Syria, when the cruel plot related in this section, was concerted against Daniel.

It is pleasing to read, that Daniel's inflexible honesty and faithful services, met with a proper reward. The reason which Darius gave for placing him in a post of distinction, reflects honour on himself, as well as on Daniel.

We find, that even the extraordinary merit of this good prophet could not secure him from that envy, which is usually the attendant of favourites. Unable to bear the lustre of his superior merit, and impatient to obtain the honours which were so liberally bestowed on him, the courtiers determined to watch for an opportunity of bringing him into disgrace with his sovereign. But no just ground of complaint could they;

they find; they therefore made his *piety* a snare, and so far obtained their wicked ends, as to get the king to sign a decree, which they had no doubt would effect his ruin.

Darius suffered his pride to prevail on him to adopt a measure, which he certainly ought, on many accounts, to have rejected.

Had Daniel regarded the dictates of worldly policy, he would have peaceably acquiesced in the orders of the court, paid the expected homage to his sovereign, and defeated the designs of his enemies. Or had he listened to the whispers of timidity and cowardice, he would have retired from the public eye, and formed some pretence for not appearing before the king, and have contented himself with worshipping his God in secret. But the holy prophet was too sincere and zealous a servant of the MOST HIGH GOD, to be capable of deserting his cause in the hour of danger; or to pay divine honours to a mortal like himself. No sooner did he know that the writing was signed, than he went to his house, and offered his petitions to the KING OF KINGS, as he was accustomed to do. What an excellent example has he left us, to maintain a steady determination, whenever our situation requires it, to sacrifice ease, profit, and honour, and even life itself, to *principle*; and what encouragement to do so, may we derive from his miraculous deliverance.

We need not fear that we shall be losers upon the whole by a faithful adherence to religious duties; for though such extraordinary interpositions are not to be expected at present, virtue will yet meet its reward. It may possibly, in some cases expose us to ridicule and reproach, nay even to danger: yet let us not be dismayed. The virtuous man has that *within*, which will sustain him under the severest shock of affliction, render him impenetrable to the sharpest darts of malice, and enable him to look at threatening death without dismay. The virtuous man has an Almighty Patron, who
will

will not suffer his enemies finally to triumph over him; a faithful guardian, who will protect him in the hour of darkness, guide him through the vale of death, and hereafter bring forth his righteousness as the light, and his judgment as the noon-day*.

It is remarkable, that, by means of Daniel, Darius was made acquainted with the supremacy of the LORD GOD, and there is reason to suppose, that Cyrus received intimation of divine truths, by the same channel.

* The above reflections are extracted from an excellent Sermon on the character of Daniel, by Dr. Enfield.

S E C T. LXXXIV.

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE FOUR BEASTS.

IN the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, and told the sum of the matters.

Daniel spake, and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of the heaven strove upon the great sea.

And four great beasts came up from the sea, diverse one from another.

The first was like a lion, and had eagle's wings: and I beheld till the wings thereof were plucked, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it.

And behold, another beast, a second like to a bear, and it raised up itself on one side, and it had three ribs in the



the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus unto it, Arise, devour much flesh.

After this I beheld, and lo, another like a leopard, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also four heads; and dominion was given to it.

After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it, and it had ten horns.

I considered the horns; and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.

I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.

I came near unto one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.

These great beasts, said he, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.

But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.

Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others, exceeding dreadful, whose teeth were of iron, and his nails of
brass;

brass; which devoured, brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;

And thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.

And the ten horns out of this kingdom are ten kings that shall arise.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

By these revelations, GOD has manifested to the world, that grandeur, empire, and glory, are His; that He bestows them on whomsoever He pleases, and withdraws them in like manner, to punish the abuse of them. We also learn from these revelations, that GOD's design in subjecting states to such astonishing revolutions, is to teach men that they are in His presence as nothing; that HE is alone the MOST HIGH, the ETERNAL KING, the SOVEREIGN ARBITER, who acts as He pleases with supreme power, both in heaven and earth.

"GOD, to make these important truths still more sensible, shewed to Daniel in a vision four dreadful beasts, rising from a vast sea, in which the four winds combat together with fury.—Under these symbols he represents to the prophet, the origin, the characteristics, and fall of the four great empires, which were to govern the world successively.

"The prophet then related more particularly, the character of each of these empires. After having represented the empire of the Babylonians under the image of a lion, and that of the Medes and Persians, under the form of a bear, greedy of prey: he draws the picture of the Grecian monarchy, under the image of a spotted leopard with four heads
and

and four wings: the Roman empire is then described under the image of a fourth beast, exceeding dreadful, with ten horns, and great iron teeth, stamping and devouring all before it." The histories of these nations shew that these symbols exactly agreed with them*.

* Rollin's Antient History.

S E C T. LXXXV.

DANIEL'S PRAYER FOR THE RESTORATION OF
ISRAEL.

IN the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, which was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans;

In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the Word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.

And I set my face unto the LORD GOD to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes:

And I prayed unto the LORD my GOD, and made my confession, and said, O LORD, the great and dreadful GOD, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments;

We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgements.

Neither

Neither have we hearkened unto thy servants the prophets, which spake in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land.

O LORD, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are afar off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee.

O LORD, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee.

To the LORD our GOD belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our GOD, to walk in his laws which he set before us by his servants the prophets.

Yea, all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing that they might not obey thy voice: therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the law of Moses, the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.

And he hath confirmed his words which he spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem.

As

As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before the LORD our GOD, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.

Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our GOD is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we obeyed not his voice.

And now, O LORD our GOD that hast brought thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast gotten thee renown as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.

O LORD, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thine anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us.

Now therefore, O our GOD, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the LORD's sake.

O my GOD, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.

O LORD, hear, O LORD, forgive; O LORD, hearken, and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my

my GOD : for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.

And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my GOD for the holy mountain of my GOD ;

Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.

And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.

At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee ; for thou art greatly beloved : therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.

Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.

Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.

And

And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself; and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.

And he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Daniel computing that the seventy years of Judah's captivity, foretold by Jeremiah, were now drawing to a conclusion, offered the foregoing prayer for their restoration. In reward for his piety, the LORD graciously vouchsafed to reveal to him by the Angel Gabriel, his purposes respecting the duration of the Jewish state after its restoration. This prophecy relates to the Messiah, and will be explained in a following part of the history.

S U P P L E M E N T.

About two years after Daniel's miraculous deliverance from the den of lions, Darius died, and Cambyſis, king of Persia, being also dead, Cyrus returned, and took upon him the government of the whole Persian empire.

S E C T.

S E C T. LXXXVI.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF CYRUS
 —THE RETURN OF THE CAPTIVE JEWS TO
 • JERUSALEM.

NOW in the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus king of Persia, that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom, and put it also in writing, saying,

Thus saith Cyrus king of Persia, The LORD GOD of heaven hath given me all the kingdoms of the earth; and he hath charged me to build him an house at Jerusalem which is in Judah.

Who is there among you of all his people? his GOD is with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD GOD of Israel (he is the GOD) which is in Jerusalem.

And whosoever remaineth in any place where he sojourneth, let the men of his place help him with silver, and with gold, and with goods, and with beasts, besides the free-will-offering for the house of GOD that is in Jerusalem.

Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and the Levites, with all them whose spirit GOD had raised to go up, to build the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem.

And

And all they that were about them strengthened their hands with vessels of silver, with gold, with goods, and with beasts, and with precious things, besides all that was willingly offered.

Also Cyrus the king brought forth the vessels of the house of the LORD, which Nebuchadnezzar had brought forth out of Jerusalem, and had put them in the house of his gods;

Even those did Cyrus king of Persia bring forth by the hand of Mithredath the treasurer, and numbered them unto Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

All the vessels of gold, and of silver were five thousand and four hundred. All these did Sheshbazzar bring up with them of the captivity that were brought up from Babylon unto Jerusalem.

Now these are the children of the province that went up out of the captivity, of those which had been carried away, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away unto Babylon, and came again unto Jerusalem and Judah, every one unto his city; which came with Zerubbabel: Jeshua, Nehemiah, Seraiah, Reelaiah, Mordecai, Bilshan, Mispar, Bigvai, Rehum, Baanah.

The whole congregation together was forty and two thousand three hundred and threescore.

Besides their servants and their maids, of whom there were seven thousand three hundred thirty and seven; and there were among them two hundred singing-men and singing-women.

Their

Their horses were seven hundred thirty and six; their mules, two hundred forty and five; Their camels four hundred thirty and five; their asses, six thousand seven hundred and twenty.

And some of the chief of the fathers, when they came to the house of the LORD which is at Jerusalem, offered freely for the house of GOD to set it up in his place.

They gave after their ability unto the treasure of the work, threescore and one thousand drams of gold, and five thousand pounds of silver, and one hundred priests garments.

So the priests and the Levites, and some of the people, and the singers, and the porters, and the Nethinims dwelt in their cities, and all Israel in their cities.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The seventy years captivity was now expired, and we may conclude, that the decree of Cyrus in favour of the Jews was obtained by Daniel; who, to induce the king to grant his request, it is likely had shewn him the prophecy of Isaiah, in which he is expressly named, one hundred and fifty years before he was born*. It is also probable, that Cyrus, when he saw in his journey into Syria so large a country as Judea lying waste and desolate, was moved with a desire to people it; and who so proper as its former inhabitants?

* Isaiah, ch. xlv. xlv.

As soon as Cyrus had issued his decree, we find numbers of Jews assembled; their chief leaders were Zerubbabel the son of Salathiel, the son of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and Jeshua the son of Jozadek the high-priest. Not only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, but remnants of the ten tribes who had been carried away by Tiglath-Pilefar, Salmaneser, and Esarhaddon, still retained the worship of GOD; these, therefore, gladly took advantage of Cyrus's decree, for it extended not to JUDAH only, but *to all the house of ISRAEL.*

S E C T. LXXXVII.

CONCLUSION OF THE REIGN OF CYRUS—THE
FOUNDATION OF THE TEMPLE LAID AT
JERUSALEM.

AND when the seventh month was come, and the children of Israel were in the cities, the people gathered themselves together as one man to Jerusalem.

Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jōzadek, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the GOD of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of GOD.

And they set the altar upon his bases; (for fear was upon them because of the people of those countries :) and they offered burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD, even burnt-offerings morning and evening :

They

They kept also the feast of tabernacles, as it is written, and offered the daily burnt-offerings by number, according to the custom, as the duty of every day required :

And afterward offered the continual burnt-offering, both of the new moons and of all the set feasts of the LORD, that were consecrated ; and of every one that willingly offered a free-will-offering unto the LORD.

From the first day of the seventh month began they to offer burnt-offerings unto the LORD. But the foundation of the temple of the LORD was not yet laid.

They gave money also unto the masons, and to the carpenters ; and meat, and drink, and oil unto them of Sidon, and to them of Tyre, to bring cedar trees from Lebanon to the sea of Joppa ; according to the grant that they had of Cyrus king of Persia.

Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and the remnant of their brethren, the priests and the Levites, and all they that were come out of the captivity unto Jerusalem ; and appointed the Levites, from twenty years old and upwards, to set forward the work of the house of the LORD.

Then stood Jeshua with his sons and his brethren, Kadmiel and his sons, the sons of Judah together,

to

to set forward the workmen in the house of God : the sons of Henadad, with their sons and their brethren the Levites.

And when the builders laid the foundation of the Temple of the LORD, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals to praise the LORD, after the ordinance of David king of Israel.

And they sung together by course, in praising and giving thanks unto the LORD ; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever towards Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout when they praised the LORD, because the foundation of the House of the LORD was laid.

But many of the priests and Levites, and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice ; and many shouted aloud for joy :

So that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people : for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It required time to collect materials, and engage workmen ; therefore the first year was employed in these necessary preparations ; but early in the second, the foundation of the temple was laid, which was done with great solemnity.

It is supposed, that during the time that the Temple was building, a Tabernacle was set up, as in the days of David.

S U P P L E M E N T.

While the Jews were carrying on the work, the Samaritans, who were planted in several cities of Israel in the room of the Israelites, whom Shalmanezzer, king of Assyria, carried away captive, desired to join with them in the work; but neither the governors nor chiefs of the families of Israel would consent, apprehensive that they were no better than idolators, notwithstanding they professed to worship the *God of Israel*. This refusal exasperated the Samaritans, who did their utmost to obstruct the work; and though they could not alter the decree of Cyrus, yet, by bribing his ministers, they, in a great measure, defeated its effect; so that for several years the building went on but slowly. These disputes gave rise to that enmity, which afterwards subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans.

It is supposed, that on this occasion Daniel gave himself up to prayer, and had some of those wonderful visions, which are found among his prophecies; and it is thought he died soon after. The character of this good man is fully displayed in the account of his life; from whence it appears, that he was universally esteemed and renowned for his amiable disposition; he devoted his heart to God in his youth, and obtained the blessing of the LORD, who, from a captive, made him a prince, and distinguished him with his Divine favour to the last.

By the death of Daniel, the Jews having lost a powerful advocate in the Persian court, their enemies took advantage of them, and succeeded in some of their designs against them; but as the people were able to work, and had the assistance

assistance of the Zidonians in respect to labour and materials, they proceeded, though not with such expedition as they would have done, if the decree of the king of Persia had been allowed to have its full influence.

In the seventh year after the restoration of the Jews, died Cyrus, their great benefactor, having reigned, from his first taking on him the command of the Persian and Median armies, thirty years; from his taking of Babylon, nine years; and from being sole monarch of the East, after the death of his uncle Darius, seven years; being at the time of his death, seventy years old. It is said of this prince that, when on his death bed, he called his family and friends about him, and expressed his hope of the immortality of the soul*.

We have seen the full completion of the prophecies respecting the Babylonian empire. Let us now read what Daniel particularly foretold respecting the great monarchies which were to succeed it.

* Rollin's Antient History.

S E C T. LXXXVIII.

EXTRACTS FROM THE PROPHECY OF DANIEL.

IN the third year of Cyrus king of Persia, a thing was revealed unto Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing was true, but the time appointed was long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.

In those days I Daniel was mourning three full weeks.

I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.

And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river which is Hiddekel; then I lift up mine eyes, and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz :

His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.

And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.

Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

Yet heard I the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then was I in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.

And behold, an hand touched me, which set me upon my knees, and upon the palms of my hands.

And he said unto me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak unto thee, and stand upright; for unto thee am I now sent.

And

And when he had spoken this word unto me, I stood trembling.

Then said he unto me, Fear not Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thine heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

But the prince of the kingdom of Persia withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, Michael one of the chief princes came to help me; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.

Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.

And when he had spoken such words unto me, I set my face toward the ground, and I became dumb.

And behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.

For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.

Then there came again and touched me one like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me, and said, O man greatly beloved, fear not; peace be unto thee, be strong, yea, be strong. And when he had spoken unto me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my Lord speak: for thou hast strengthened me.

Then said he, Knowest thou wherefore I come unto thee? and now will I return to fight with the prince of Persia: and when I am gone forth, lo, the prince of Grecia shall come.

But I will shew thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things but Michael your prince.

Also I in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I stood to confirm and to strengthen him.

And now will I shew thee the truth, Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia, and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.

And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From the description given of the glorious person who appeared to Daniel, we may judge that He could be no other than the LORD GOD. From these prophecies we may judge, that He was at all times the *image of the invisible God*, though concealed from mortal eyes, on account of their unworthiness to behold Him. How graciously did He encourage and strengthen Daniel, assuring him also, that He ordered all things, though the wonders of his providence were concealed beneath the veil of natural causes. The prophecies in this section were gradually completed.

After Cyrus the founder of the Persian empire, there were twelve successive monarchs, CAMBYSES, SMERDIS MA-
GUS,

GUS, DARIUS HYSTASPES, XERXES the first, ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS, XERXES the second, SOGDIANUS, DARIUS NOTHUS, ARTAXERXES MNEMON, ARTAXERXES OCHUS, ARSES, and DARIUS CODOMANUS.

We will now go back to the history of the Jews after the death of Cyrus, under the reign of his son Cambyfes.

CAMBYSES being of a very different disposition from his father, the enemies of the Jews addressed themselves to him, in order to prevail with him to stop the building of the Temple; but it seems he had too much respect for the memory of his father, to be induced publickly to revoke his decree; however, he defeated in a great measure the design of it, by several discouragements, so that it went on very slowly in his days.

The next king was SMERDIS, who is called in scripture Artaxerxes. As soon as he was settled on the throne, the Samaritans endeavoured to prejudice him against the Jews, as related in the following section.

S E C T. LXXXIX.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS AND SAMARITANS
DURING THE REIGNS OF ARTAXERXES AND
DARIUS HYSTASPES.

AND in the days of Artaxerxes, the Samaritans wrote letters unto the king. This is the copy of the letter that they sent unto him, even unto Artaxerxes the king; Thy servants the men on this side of the river and at such a time.

Be it known unto the king, that the Jews which came up from thee to us are come unto Jerufalem, building the rebellious and the bad city, and have fet up the walls thereof, and joined the foundations.

Be it known now unto the king, that if this city be builded, and the walls fet up again, then will they not pay toll, tribute and custom, and fo wilt thou endamage the revenue of the kings.

Now becaufe we have maintenance from the king's palace, and it was not meet for us to fee the king's dishonour; therefore have we fent and certified the king.

That fearch may be made in the book of the records of thy fathers: fo fhalt thou find in the book of the records, and know that this city is a rebellious city, and hurtful unto kings and provinces, and that they have moved fedition within the fame of old time: for which caufe was this city destroyed.

We certify the king, that if this city be builded again, and the walls thereof fet up, by this means thou fhalt have no portion on this fide the river.

Then fent the king this answer: The letter which ye fent unto us hath been plainly read before me.

And I commanded, and fearch hath been made, and it is found that this city of old time hath made infurrection againft kings, and that rebellion and fedition have been made therein.

There have been mighty kings alfo over Jerufalem, which have ruled over all countries beyond the river; and toll, tribute and custom was paid unto them.

Give

Give ye now commandment to cause these men to cease, and that this city be not builded, until another commandment shall be given from me.

Take heed now that ye fail not to do this: why should damage grow to the hurt of the kings?

Now when the copy of king Artaxerxes' letter was read before Rehum and Shimshai the scribe, and their companions, they went up in haste to Jerusalem unto the Jews, and made them to cease by force and power.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Artaxerxes continued but eight months on the throne. After his death, DARIUS, the son of Hystaspes, a noble Persian, who had followed Cyrus in all his wars, was raised to the throne. Although by the death of Artaxerxes, his edict for stopping the building of the Temple was now at an end, yet the Jews, neglecting to resume the work, God smote the land with barrenness; but in the second year of Darius, they were informed by the prophet Haggai, of the cause of this judgement, and exhorted to their duty.

S E C T. XC.

THE PROPHECY OF HAGGAI.

IN the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet unto Ze-

rubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedeck the high priest, saying;

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, This people say, The time is not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built.

Then came the word of the LORD by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O ye! to dwell in your cieled houses, and this house lie waste?

Now therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts; Consider your ways.

Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, saith the LORD.

Ye looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the LORD of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house.

Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit.

And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.

Then Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Josedeck the high priest, with all the remnant of the people, obeyed the voice of the LORD their GOD, and the words of Haggai the prophet, as the LORD their GOD had sent him; and the people did fear before the LORD.

Then

Then spake Haggai the LORD's messenger in the LORD's message unto the people, saying, I am with you, saith the LORD.

And the LORD stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Jozadech the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the LORD of hosts their God;

In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king.

In the seventh month, in the one and twentieth day of the month, came the word of the LORD by the prophet, Haggai, saying, Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jozadech the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying,

Who is left among you that saw this house in her first glory? and how do ye see it now? is it not in your eyes in comparison of it as nothing?

Yet now be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the LORD; and be strong, O Joshua son of Jozadech the high priest: and be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith the LORD of hosts:

According to the word that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so my spirit remaineth among you; fear ye not.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts ; yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land ;

And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come : and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts.

The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts.

The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the LORD of hosts : and in this place will I give peace, saith the LORD of hosts.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This prophecy is in such very plain language, that it needs no comment. One thing, however, is particularly worthy of observation, viz. that those pious people, whose zeal for the honour of the LORD made them melt into tears when they recollected the splendor of the former Temple, were comforted with an assurance, that the glory of the second Temple should exceed that of the first. The accomplishment of this prophecy will be shewn in a future part of this history.

S E C T. XCI.

PART OF THE PROPHECIES OF ZECHARIAH AND HAGGAI.

IN the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah the son
of

of Barachiah the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts.

Be not as your fathers unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings; but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the LORD.

Your fathers, where are they? and the prophets, do they live for ever?

But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned, and said, Like as the LORD of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us.

In the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD by Haggai, the prophet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ask now the priests concerning the law, saying, If one bear holy flesh in the skirt of his garment, and with his skirt do touch bread, or pottage, or wine, or oil, or any meat, shall it be holy? And the priests answered and said, No.

Then said, Haggai, If one that is unclean by a dead body touch any of these, shall it be unclean? And the priests answered and said, It shall be unclean.

Then

Then answered Haggai, and said, So is this people, and so is this nation before me, saith the LORD, and so is every work of their hands: and that which they offer there is unclean.

And now, I pray you, consider from this day and upward, from before a stone was laid upon a stone in the temple of the LORD:

Since those days were when one came to an heap of twenty measures, there were but ten: when one came to the press-fat for to draw fifty vessels out of the press, there were but twenty.

I smote you with blasting, and with mildew, and with hail, in all the labours of your hands; yet ye turned not to me, saith the LORD.

Consider now from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day that the foundation of the LORD's temple was laid, consider it.

Is the seed yet in the barn? yea, as yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive tree hath not brought forth: from this day will I bless you.

And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying, Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those
that

that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the LORD of hosts.

Thus the prophets, Haggai, and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophesied unto the Jews that were in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel, even unto them.

Then rose up Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and Joshua the son of Jozadech, and began to build the house of God which is at Jerusalem: and with them were the prophets of God helping them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Jews, thus reprov'd and encouraged, soon set about the building again, under the Divine favour and protection. How merciful and gracious was the LORD in all his dispensations, towards his people Israel!

S E C T. XCII.

CONTINUATION OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEW.

AT the same time came to them Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and their companions, and said thus unto them,
Who

Who hath commanded you to build this house, and to make up this wall?

Then said we unto them after this manner, What are the names of the men that make this building?

But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius: and then they returned answer by letter concerning this matter.

The copy of the letter that Tatnai, governor on this side the river, and Shetharboznai, and his companions the Apharsachites, which were on this side the river, sent unto Darius the king.

They sent a letter unto him, wherein was written thus; Unto Darius the king, all peace.

Be it known unto the king, that we went into the province of Judea, to the house of the great God, which is builded with great stones, and timber is laid in the walls, and this work goeth fast on, and prospereth in their hands.

Then asked we those elders, and said unto them thus, Who commanded you to build this house, and to make up these walls?

We asked their names also, to certify thee, that we might write the names of the men that were the chief of them.

And thus they returned us answer, saying, We are the servants of the God of heaven and earth, and build the house that was builded these many years ago, which a great king of Israel builded and set up.

But

But after that our fathers had provoked the God of heaven unto wrath, he gave them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, the Chaldean, who destroyed this house, and carried the people away into Babylon.

But in the first year of Cyrus the king of Babylon, the same king Cyrus made a decree to build this house of God.

And the vessels also of gold and silver of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took out of the temple that was in Jerusalem, and brought them into the temple of Babylon, those did Cyrus the king take out of the temple of Babylon, and they were delivered unto one, whose name was Sheshbazzar, whom he had made governor :

And said unto him, Take these vessels, go, carry them into the temple that is in Jerusalem, and let the house of God be builded in his place.

Then came the same Sheshbazzar, and laid the foundation of the house of God which is in Jerusalem : and since that time even until now, hath it been in building, and yet it is not finished.

Now therefore, if it seem good to the king, let there be search made in the king's treasure house, which is there at Babylon, whether it be so, that a decree was made of Cyrus the king to build this house of God at Jerusalem, and let the king send his pleasure to us concerning this matter.

Then

Then Darius the king made a decree, and search was made in the house of the rolls, where the treasures were laid up in Babylon.

And there was found at Achmetha, in the palace that is in the province of the Medes, a roll, and therein was a record thus written:

In the first year of Cyrus the king, the same Cyrus the king made a decree concerning the house of God at Jerusalem, Let the house be builded, the place where they offered sacrifices, and let the foundations thereof be strongly laid; the height thereof threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof threescore cubits; with three rows of great stones, and a row of new timber: and let the expences be given out of the king's house.

And also let the golden and silver vessels of the house of God, which Nebuchadnezzar took forth out of the temple which is at Jerusalem, and brought unto Babylon, be restored, and brought again unto the temple which is at Jerusalem, every one to his place, and place them in the house of God.

Now therefore, Tatnai governor beyond the river, Shethar-boznai, and your companions the Apharsachites, which are beyond the river, be ye far from thence:

Let the work of this house of God alone: let the governor of the Jews and the elders of the Jews build this house of God in his place.

Moreover, I make a decree what ye shall do to the elders of these Jews for the building of this house
of

of GOD : that of the king's goods, even of the tribute beyond the river, forthwith expences be given unto these men, that they be not hindered.

And that which they have need of, both young bullocks, and rams, and lambs, for the burnt offerings of the GOD of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the appointment of the priests which are at Jerusalem, let it be given them day by day without fail :

That they may offer sacrifices of sweet favours unto the GOD of heaven, and pray for the life of the king, and of his sons.

Also I have made a decree, that whosoever shall alter this word, let timber be pulled down from his house, and being set up, let him be hanged thereon : and let his house be made a dunghill for this.

And the GOD that hath caused his name to dwell there, destroy all kings and people that shall put to their hand to alter and to destroy this house of GOD which is at Jerusalem. I Darius have made a decree : let it be done with speed.

Then Tatnai, governor on this side the river, Shethar-boznai, and their companions, according to that which Darius the king had sent, so they did speedily.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Tatnai was governor of Palestine under the king of Persia.

Darius

Darius seems to have had a very exalted idea of the LORD GOD. The publishing of this decree completed the restoration of the Jewish state, from the destruction of which, by the burning of the City and Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, was exactly seventy years, as the prophet Jeremiah had foretold*. They were now in a much better state than they had lately been in Babylon; but very inferior to the former glory of the kingdom of Israel. They had now no king, yet the sceptre remained in the tribe of Judah, for Zerubabel their governor was lineally descended from David, and they had still prophets to direct and comfort them.

* See Section 85.

S E C T. XCIII.

THE PEOPLE ENQUIRE OF THE LORD CONCERNING THEIR FASTING, AND ARE REPROVED BY ZECHARIAH.

AND it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu; when they had sent unto the house of GOD Sherezer and Regem-melech and their men, to pray before the LORD; and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these many years? Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto Zechariah, saying,

Speak

Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did ye not eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

And the word of the LORD come unto Zechariah, saying,

Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassion every man to his brother:

And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried and they would not hear, so they cried and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

But

But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned : for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Jews who remained in Babylon, did not know whether they should still observe the solemn fasts, which had been appointed on account of the destruction of Jerusalem, or not. Zechariah was commanded to take this opportunity of enforcing the observance of moral duties, that they might not involve themselves in such calamities, as had befallen their fathers.

S E C T. XCIV.

GOD'S BLESSING RESTORED.

A GAIN the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called, A city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts, The holy mountain.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts: There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem

falem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.

And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;

And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their GOD in truth and in righteousness.

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out, or came in, because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

For the seed shall be prosperous: the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give her dew: and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.

And

And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

For thus saith the LORD of hosts, As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates:

And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

This prophecy must have afforded great joy to the Jews, as it assured them not only of prosperity, but of the returning favour of the LORD. They were now once more in possession of the greatest treasure, which any nation can possess, the DIVINE BLESSING. It is worthy of particular regard, that, in order to secure this, the practice of *moral duties* is essentially necessary, and that, without them, *ceremonial observances* are unacceptable to the LORD.

S U P P L E M E N T.

In the beginning of the fifth year of Darius, the Babylonians revolted from him, on account of his having removed

moved the Imperial seat to Shushan, and therefore they resolved to set up a king for themselves, and began to lay in provisions for a war. At length they broke into open rebellion, and were besieged by Darius. Conscious that they were not able to meet him in the field, they resolved to maintain themselves during a siege; and, that their provisions might hold out, came to a desperate resolution to cut off the useless part of the inhabitants; and therefore collecting together the women and children, they strangled them all, excepting only that each man was allowed to save one of his wives, and a maid servant to do the work of his house.—The Israelites had been warned, about two years before, to flee out of that land, that they might be delivered from the plagues which were coming on it; and there is great reason to suppose that they did so. Darius, in about a year and eight months, took Babylon; and as soon as he was master of the place, he removed its hundred gates, and beat down its walls, reducing their height from two hundred cubits to thirty, and gave the inhabitants up for a spoil to the Persians, who had been their servants. He impaled three thousand of the most guilty, and pardoned the rest.

It is to be observed, that the *punishment* of Babylon kept pace with the *restoration* of Judah, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah*; and they were subjected to the Persians, in the same manner as they had conquered and subjected the Jews. Babylon languished from this time, and at last came to utter desolation.

* Jer. xxv. 12, 13, 14.

S E C T. XCV.

THE TEMPLE AT JERUSALEM FINISHED AND
DEDICATED.

AND the elders of the Jews builded, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet, and Zechariah the son of Iddo. And they builded, and finished the Temple, according to the commandment of the GOD of Israel, and according to the commandment of Cyrus, and Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

And this house was finished on the third day of the month of Adar, which was in the sixth year of the reign of Darius the king.

And the children of Israel, the priests and the Levites, and the rest of the children of the captivity, kept the dedication of this house of GOD with joy, and offered at the dedication of this house of GOD an hundred bullocks, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs; and for a sin-offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats, according to the number of the tribes of Israel.

And they set the priests in their divisions, and the Levites in their courses, for the service of GOD which is at Jerusalem; as it is written in the book of Moses.

For the priests and the Levites were purified together, all of them were pure, and killed the passover for all
the

the children of the captivity, and for their brethren the priests, and for themselves.

And the children of Israel, which were come again out of captivity, and all such as had separated themselves unto them from the filthiness of the heathen of the land, to seek the LORD GOD of Israel, did eat.

And the children of the captivity kept the passover upon the fourteenth day of the first month.

And kept the feast of unleavened bread seven days with joy: for the LORD had made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Persia unto them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of GOD, the GOD of Israel.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The Israelites must undoubtedly have felt great joy at the dedication of the Temple. It was not in their power to adorn it in so magnificent a manner as Solomon's, nor to celebrate its dedication with such numberless sacrifices; and it wanted advantages which the first enjoyed, particularly the *TOKEN of the DIVINE PRESENCE*, the *ARK of the COVENANT*, the *URIM and THUMMIM*, and the *HOLY FIRE* on the *ALTAR*; but they had a promise, *that the glory of this Temple should exceed that of Solomon*. It is observable, that there were twelve he-goats offered; from which we may understand, that some of *all the tribes* returned to Jerusalem, though that of Judah being the most numerous, they were denominated from it; and from this time, *ALL* the people began to be called *JEWS*.

The Temple was twenty years in building: at the dedication of it, the following psalms are supposed to have been sung:

Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

While I live, will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my GOD while I have any being.

Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth: in that very day his thoughts perish.

Happy is he that hath the GOD of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his GOD:

Which made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:

Which executeth judgment for the oppressed, which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners:

The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

The LORD preserveth the strangers: he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy GOD, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our GOD, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely.

The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

He telleth the number of the stars: he calleth them all by their names.

Great is our LORD, and of great power: his understanding is infinite.

The LORD listeth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving: sing praise upon the harp unto our GOD:

Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

He

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He giveth to the beast his food, and to the young ravens which cry.

He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates: he hath blessed thy children within thee.

He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes.

He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.

He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes, and his judgments unto Israel.

He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not known them. Praise ye the LORD.

Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

He hath also stablished them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons and all deeps.

Fire, and hail; snow, and vapours; stormy wind fulfilling his word;

Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

Both young men, and maidens: old men, and children:

Let them praise the name of the LORD; for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

S U P P L E M E N T .

Cyrus and Darius had assigned the tribute due to them from Samaria, to be paid towards the building of the Temple, and furnishing the Jews with sacrifices: that oblations and prayers might be offered there, for the king and royal family, and the welfare of the Persian empire. This was a great mortification to the Samaritans, and they used their utmost endeavours to get rid of what they thought an indignity, but could not succeed; and, on pretence that the Temple was *finished*, they refused to let the Jews have the annual sum any longer; on which, complaint was made to Darius, and the Samaritans enjoined to pay it, as formerly.

Darius desirous of enlarging his empire, entered into India, and brought into subjection that large country, from which he annually received a considerable sum. Some years after, he invaded GREECE, but was repulsed with loss; he therefore resolved to make an invasion on it in person, and notwithstanding the Egyptians revolted from him, he persisted in his design, but determined to send a part of his forces to
reduce

reduce Egypt. Darius was at this time a very old man, and as there was a contest amongst his sons about the succession, he thought it necessary to settle this point before he went on his expedition, and declared XERXES his successor. When all things were ready for the Grecian war, Darius fell sick and died, having reigned thirty-six years. He was a prince of wisdom, clemency and justice.

The Divine Being, who appeared to Daniel, declared, that the fourth king of Persia after his time, should exceed all his predecessors in power and riches; that he should be puffed up with an idea of his grandeur, which would rise to the highest pitch; that he would assemble all the people in his boundless dominions, and lead them on to attempt the conquest of Greece *. Let us now see how this was accomplished.

THE REIGN OF XERXES, KING OF PERSIA.

Xerxes, in the first year of his reign, carried on the preparations for the Grecian war: he confirmed to the Jews all the privileges granted to them by Darius, especially that of the tribute of Samaria. In the 2d year of his reign he subdued the Egyptians, and reduced them to a heavier yoke than before. Elated with this success, he resolved upon a war with Greece, and made great preparations for it. Jeshua, the high-priest of the Jews, died about this time, in the fifty third year of his priesthood, and Jehoiakim, his son, succeeded in that office. Early in the next spring Xerxes set out on his expedition against Greece, with a land army consisting of one million seven hundred thousand foot, and eighty thousand horse, and a fleet proportionable; but being vanquished by Themistocles, the Athenian general, in a memorable battle at Salamis, he escaped in a small fishing-boat, and returned home, leaving three hundred thousand soldiers under the command

* See Section.

of one of his generals, to conquer Greece; which army was, not long after, entirely destroyed at Platea, by Pausanias, the Spartan.

Xerxes, on his return home towards Shushan, passing through Babylon, made great devastation there, by destroying their temples and images, by which he helped to fulfill the prophecies of Jeremiah and Isaiah. The gold and silver, of which the images were made, he converted to common uses. Being at last wholly discouraged by his losses and defeats, he gave his mind entirely up to luxury and dissipation, and grew into great contempt with his people. Artabanes, the captain of his guards, conspired against him, and with the assistance of Mithridates, his chamberlain, got into the royal apartment, and murdered him whilst he slept in his bed.

THE REIGN OF ARTAXERXES LONGIMANUS.

ARTAXERXES, one of the sons of Xerxes, succeeded to the throne; he is by the Greek historians called LONGIMANUS, on account of the great extent of his dominions, but in some parts of scripture he is called AHASUERUS.

S E C T. XCVI.

AHASUERUS MAKES A ROYAL FEAST.

NOW it came to pass in the days of Ahasuerus, (this is Ahasuerus which reigned from India even unto Ethiopia, over an hundred and seven and twenty provinces:) That in those days, when the king Ahasuerus sat on the throne of his kingdom, which was in Shushan the palace.

In

In the third year of his reign, he made a feast unto all his princes and his servants; the power of Persia and Media, the nobles and princes of the provinces, being before him: when he shewed the riches of his glorious kingdom, and the honour of his excellent majesty, many days, even an hundred and fourscore days.

And when these days were expired, the king made a feast unto all the people that were present in Shushan the palace, both unto great and small, seven days, in the court of the garden of the king's palace; where were white, green, and blue hangings, fastened with cords of fine linen and purple to silver rings, and pillars of marble; the beds were of gold and silver, upon a pavement of red, and blue, and white, and black marble.

And they gave them drink in vessels of gold, the vessels being diverse one from another, and royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king.

And the drinking was according to the law: none did compel; for so the king had appointed to all the officers of his house, that they should do according to every man's pleasure.

Also Vashti the queen made a feast for the women in the royal house which belonged to king Ahasuerus.

On the seventh day, when the heart of the king was merry with wine, he commanded Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, and Abagtha, Zethar, and Carcas, the seven chamberlains that served in the presence of Ahasuerus the king,

To bring Vashti the queen before the king, with the crown royal, to shew the people and the princes her beauty; for she was fair to look on.

But the queen Vashti refused to come at the king's commandment by his chamberlains; therefore was the king very wroth, and his anger burned in him.

Then the king said to the wisemen, which knew the times), for so was the king's manner toward all that knew law and judgment: And the next unto him was Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena, and Memucan, the seven princes of Persia and Media, which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom;) What shall we do unto the queen Vashti according to law, because she hath not performed the commandment of the king Ahafuerus by the chamberlains?

And Memucan answered before the king and the princes, Vashti the queen hath not done wrong to the king only, but also to all the princes, and to all the people that are in all the provinces of the king Ahafuerus.

For this deed of the queen shall come abroad unto all women, so that they shall despise their husbands in their eyes, when it shall be reported, the king Ahafuerus commanded Vashti the queen to be brought in before him, but she came not.

Likewise shall the ladies of Persia and Media say this day unto all the king's princes, which have heard of the deed of the queen. Thus shall there arise too much contempt and wrath.

If

If it please the king, let there go a royal commandment from him, and let it be written among the laws of the Persians and the Medes that it be not altered, That Vashti come no more before king Ahasuerus; and let the king give her royal estate unto another that is better than she.

And when the king's decree which he shall make shall be published throughout all his empire, (for it is great) all the wives shall give to their husbands honour both to great and small.

And the saying pleased the king and the princes; and the king did according to the word of Memucan: For he sent letters into all the king's provinces, into every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language, that every man should bear rule in his own house, and that it should be published according to the language of every people.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From the beginning of this section we may form a lively idea of the greatness and magnificence of Ahasuerus. He seems to have been possessed also of a noble and liberal mind, and to have had a very just notion of hospitality, in allowing every one to follow his own inclinations, without being urged to exceed the bounds of temperance. He did not, however, observe the prudence which he meant to recommend; for the golden goblets circulated at the royal table, till the king lost the power of judging what respect and decorum were due to his queen, or he would not have

desired Vashti to exhibit herself to public view, in those apartments appropriated to the men, contrary to the custom of the Persians. Vashti considered it as a great indignity put upon her, to be required to expose her royal person to † idle gaze of a set of riotous guests, who, in their hours of sobriety, might be the first to condemn her compliance; she therefore sent back a peremptory refusal, which was certainly very wrong. Had she softened her denial with kind remonstrances, and respectful excuses, the king might perhaps have been induced to change his purpose; but the public contempt which she put upon his authority, both as her sovereign and her husband, was a real offence, which it was not easy, or indeed proper to pass over, at such a time especially, when the eyes of all the kingdom were in a particular manner directed to the throne. Many wives might have pleaded the queen's example as an excuse for undutiful and imperious behaviour; as it is to be thought numbers of men did that of the king, for intemperance in drinking, and a capricious exercise of that authority, which the Divine law ordained to promote domestic happiness, not to display despotic power, or to separate those who are bound together by the matrimonial tie.

The sentence against Vashti, though, perhaps, agreeable to rigid justice, appears particularly severe, as Ahafuerus had required her to do, what was generally esteemed by the Persians, inconsistent with the rules of female delicacy. How far his example is deserving of imitation, may be learnt from the *New Testament*, which requires *Wives to submit to their husbands, and husbands to love their wives, and not to be bitter against them**. Those of either sex, who are placed in exalted stations, ought, without doubt, to be particularly circumspect in their conduct; but, thanks be to God, Britons have a pattern before them, the very reverse of that

* Col. iii. 19.

which

which was exhibited by Ahasuerus to his subjects; and however the Persian husbands might fear the loss of their authority through the disobedience of their queen, no such danger at present exists in this nation. Happy would it be for thousands, were the royal example allowed to have the same extensive influence, as the nobles of Persia apprehended from poor Vashti's opposition to her haughty lord. We should then no longer see those, who were designed to bear *together* the burden of evils incident to humanity, and share its joys; wasting, in separate scenes of dissipation, the hours allotted by Divine Providence to domestic pleasures and employments. We should no longer hear of those divorces, which are a scandal to our age and nation, but *every man would know how to bear proper rule in his house; and wives, both great and small, would learn from the consort of their sovereign, to give due honour to their husbands.*

S E C T. XCVII.

ESTHER MADE QUEEN INSTEAD OF VASHTI.

AFTER these things, when the wrath of king Ahasuerus was appeased, he remembered Vashti, and what she had done, and what was decreed against her.

Then said the king's servants, that ministered unto him, Let there be fair young virgins sought for the king.

And let the maiden which pleaseth the king, be queen instead of Vashti. And the thing pleased the king, and he did so.

Now

Now in Shushan the palace, there was a certain Jew, whose name was Mordecai, the son of Jair, the son of Shimei, the son of Kish, a Benjamite:

Who had been carried away from Jerusalem with the captivity which had been carried away with Jecooniah king of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away.

And he brought up Hadassah, that is Esther, his uncle's daughter: for she had neither father nor mother, and the maid was fair and beautiful: whom Mordecai when her father and mother were dead, took for his own daughter.

And it came to pass that the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Then the king made a great feast unto all his princes and his servants, even Esther's feast; and he made a release to the provinces, and gave gifts, according to the state of the king.

And when the virgins were gathered together the second time, then Mordecai sat in the king's gate.

Esther had not yet shewed her kindred nor her people; as Mordecai had charged her: for Esther did the commandment of Mordecai, like as when she was brought up with him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It is thought that Ahasuerus had a great affection for his Queen, and would have restored her to favour, but that the decrees of the Persians were irreversible. His courtiers, perceiving that, when his anger subsided, he lamented her loss, persuaded him to chuse another consort, which he did four years afterwards. Though Mordecai was zealously attached to the God of his fathers, he had, for prudential reasons, concealed his religion from the knowledge of the Persians, and enjoyed a place under their government. He is supposed to have been one of those, who went up to Jerusalem with the first, to obtain a settlement; and that he staid till the building of the Temple was stopped, and then went to Babylon and the Persian court, in hopes of doing them some service there.

Mordecai had the interest of his brethren at heart, when he laid a scheme to get Esther to be queen, and she was actuated by the same motives to coincide with him. The sequel will shew, that her exaltation was productive of great benefit to the Jews.

It is very remarkable that a poor orphan captive should be raised to a throne.

S E C T. XCVIII.

HAMAN EXALTED—DECREE AGAINST THE
JEWS.

IN those days, while Mordecai sat in the king's gate, two of the king's chamberlains, Bigthan and Tereſh, of those which kept the door, were wroth, and fought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.

And

And the thing was known to Mordecai, who told it unto Esther the queen: and Esther certified the king thereof in Mordecai's name.

And when inquisition was made of the matter, it was found out: therefore they were both hanged on a tree. And it was written in the book of the chronicles before the king.

After these things did king Ahafuerus promote Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him, and set his seat above all the princes that were with him.

And all the king's servants that were in the king's gate, bowed, and revered Haman: for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence.

Then the king's servants which were in the king's gate, said unto Mordecai, Why transgressest thou the king's commandment?

Now it came to pass, when they spake daily unto him, and he hearkened not unto them, that they told Haman to see whether Mordecai's matters would stand; for he had told them that he was a Jew.

And when Haman saw that Mordecai bowed not, nor did him reverence, then was Haman full of wrath.

And he thought scorn to lay hands on Mordecai alone; for they had shewed him the people of Mordecai: wherefore Haman sought to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahafuerus, even the people of Mordecai.

In

In the first month, that is, the month Nisan, in the twelfth year of king Ahafuerus, they cast Pur, that is, the lot, before Haman, from day to day, and from month to month, to the twelfth month, that is, the month Adar.

And Haman said unto king Ahafuerus, There is a certain people scattered abroad, and dispersed among the people, in all the provinces of thy kingdom; and their laws are diverse from all people; neither keep they the king's laws: therefore it is not for the king's profit to suffer them.

If it please the king, let it be written that they may be destroyed: and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the hands of those that have the charge of the business, to bring it into the king's treasuries.

And the king took his ring from his hand, and gave it unto Haman, the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the Jews' enemy.

And the king said unto Haman, The silver is given to thee, the people also, to do with them as it seemeth good to thee.

Then were the king's scribes called on the thirteenth day of the first month, and there was written according to all that Haman had commanded unto the king's lieutenants, and to the governors that were over every province, and to the rulers of every people of every province according to the writing thereof, and to every people after their language; in the name of king Ahafuerus was it written, and sealed with the king's ring.

The

The copy of the letters was this : The great king Artaxerxes writeth these things to the princes and governors, that are under him from India unto Ethiopia, in an hundred and seven and twenty provinces.

After that I became lord over many nations, and had dominion over the whole world, not lifted up with presumption of my authority, but carrying myself alway with equity and mildness, I purposed to settle my subjects continually in a quiet life, and making my kingdom peaceable, and open for passage to the utmost coasts, to renew peace, which is desired of all men.

Now when I asked my counsellors how this may be brought to pass, Haman, that excelled in wisdom among us, and was approved for his constant good will, and stedfast fidelity, and had the honour of the second place in the kingdom, declared unto us, that in all nations throughout the world there was scattered a certain malicious people, that had laws contrary to all nations, and continually despised the commandments of kings, so as the uniting of our kingdoms honourably intended by us, cannot go forward.

Seeing then we understand that this people alone is continually in opposition unto all men, differing in the strange manner of their laws, and evil-affected to our state, working all the mischief they can, that our kingdom may not be firmly established :

Therefore have we commanded, that all they that are signified in writing unto you by Haman (who is ordained

ordained over the affairs, and is next unto us) shall all, with their wives and children, be utterly destroyed by the sword of their enemies, without all mercy and pity, the fourteenth day of the twelfth month Adar of this present year: that they, who are old, and now also are malicious, may in one day with violence go into the grave, and so ever hereafter cause our affairs to be well settled, and without trouble.

And the letters were sent by posts into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to cause to perish, all Jews both young and old, little children and women, in one day, even upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

The copy of the writing for a commandment to be given in every province was published unto all people, that they should be ready against that day.

The posts went out, being hastened by the king's commandment, and the decree was given in Shushan the palace. And the king and Haman sat down to drink, but the city Shushan was perplexed.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The service which Mordecai rendered to the king and government, was a very important one: what a happy circumstance was it for this monarch, that Esther had been honoured with his royal preference. The reason that Mordecai would not bow to Haman, was, that he knew him to be an Amalekite, one of those people who bore constant hatred to the
 God

God of Israel. Haman certainly must have been a very wicked as well as proud man, or he would not have taken such cruel revenge for a personal affront. Not content with desiring the death of the offender, he wished to exterminate the whole nation to which he belonged.

How unjust was Ahasuerus to consent that a set of people, who were under his protection, should be barbarously massacred, without any enquiry into their conduct, only because his favorite had represented them as enemies to the state.--- To drown reflection, he had recourse to that intoxicating liquor that had once before hurried him into an act of severity, which his cooler judgment condemned.

No wonder that the city of Shushan should be perplexed; for it must needs grieve every person of loyalty and humanity to see their king so abused, and the innocent condemned to suffer.

S E C T. XCIX.

MORDECAI'S DISTRESS.—HIS PRAYER.—
ESTHER'S PRAYER.

WHEN Mordecai perceived all that was done, he thought upon all the works of the LORD, and made his prayer unto him, Saying, O LORD, LORD, the King Almighty: for the whole world is in thy power, and if thou hast appointed to save Israel, there is no man can gainsay thee.

For thou hast made heaven and earth, and all the wondrous things under the heaven.

Thou art LORD of all things, and there is no man that can resist thee, which art the LORD. Thou knowest all things, and thou knowest, LORD, that
it

it was neither in contempt nor pride, nor for any desire of glory, that I did not bow down to proud Haman.

For I could have been content with good will for the salvation of Israel, to kiss the soles of his feet.

But I did this, that I might not prefer the glory of man above the glory of God: neither will I worship any but thee, O God, neither will I do it in pride.

And now, O LORD God, and King, spare thy people: for their eyes are upon us to bring us to nought; yea, they desire to destroy the inheritance that hath been thine from the beginning.

Despise not the portion which thou hast delivered out of Egypt for thine own self.

Hear my prayer, and be merciful unto thine inheritance: turn our sorrow into joy, that we may live, O LORD, and praise thy name: and destroy not the mouths of them that praise thee, O LORD.

Mordecai rent his clothes, and put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a loud and a bitter cry:

And came even before the king's gate: for none might enter into the king's gate cloathed with sackcloth.

All Israel in like manner cried most earnestly unto the LORD, because their death was before their eyes.

And in every province withersoever the king's commandment, and his decree came, there was great mourning

mourning among the Jews, and fasting, and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.

So Esther's maids, and her chamberlains came and told it her: Then was the queen exceedingly grieved, and she sent raiment to clothe Mordecai, and to take away his sackcloth from him: but he received it not.

Then called Esther for Hatach, one of the king's chamberlains, whom he had appointed to attend upon her, and gave him a commandment to Mordecai, to know what it was, and why it was.

So Hatach went forth to Mordecai unto the street of the city, which was before the king's gate.

And Mordecai told him of all that had happened unto him, and of the sum of the money that Haman had promised to pay to the king's treasuries for the Jews, to destroy them.

Also he gave him the copy of the writing of the decree, that was given at Shushan to destroy them, to shew it unto Esther, and to declare it unto her, and to charge her that she should go in unto the king, to make supplication unto him, and to make request before him for her people.

And Hatach came and told Esther the words of Mordecai.

Again Esther spake unto Hatach, and gave him commandment unto Mordecai ;

All the king's servants, and the people of the king's provinces do know, that whosoever, whether
man

man or woman, shall come unto the king into the inner court, who is not called, there is one law of his to put him to death, except such to whom the king shall hold out the golden sceptre, that he may live : but I have not been called to come in unto the king, these thirty days.

And they told to Mordecai Esther's words.

Then Mordecai commanded to answer Esther, Think not with thyself that thou shalt escape in the king's house, more than all the Jews.

For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place, but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed : and who knoweth, whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this ?

Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer,

Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day : I also and my maidens will fast likewise, and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law ; and if I perish, I perish.

So Mordecai went his way, and did according to all that Esther had commanded him.

Queen Esther also being in fear of death, resorted unto the LORD :

And laid away her glorious apparel, and put on the garments of anguish and mourning : and instead
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of precious ointments, she covered her head with ashes, and she humbled her body greatly, and all the places of her joy she filled with her torn hair.

And she prayed unto the LORD GOD of Israel, saying, O LORD, thou only art our King: help me desolate woman, who have no helper but thee:

For my danger is in mine hand.

From my youth up I have heard in the tribe of my family, that thou, O LORD, tookest Israel from among all people, and our fathers from all their predecessors, for a perpetual inheritance, and thou hast performed whatsoever thou didst promise them.

And now we have sinned before thee: therefore hast thou given us into the hands of our enemies, because we worshipped their gods: O LORD, thou art righteous.

Nevertheless, it satisfieth them not, that we are in bitter captivity: but they have stricken hand with their idols,

That they will abolish the thing that thou with thy mouth hast ordained, and destroy thine inheritance, and stop the mouth of them that praise thee, and quench the glory of thy house, and of thine altar,

And open the mouths of the heathen to set forth the praises of the idols, and to magnify a fleshly king for ever.

O LORD, give not thy sceptre unto them that be nothing, and let them not laugh at our fall; but
turn

turn their device upon themselves, and make him an example that hath begun this against us.

Remember, O LORD, make thyself known in time of our affliction, and give me boldness, O King of the nations, and LORD of all power.

Give me eloquent speech in my mouth before the lion: turn his heart to hate him that fighteth against us, that there may be an end of him, and of all that are likeminded to him:

But deliver us with thine hand, and help me that am desolate, and which have no other helper but thee.

Thou knowest all things, O LORD, thou knowest that I hate the glory of the unrighteous; thou knowest my necessity, for I abhor the sign of my high estate which is upon my head in the days wherein I shew myself, and that I wear it not when I am in private by myself.

And that thine handmaid hath not eaten at Haman's table, and that I have not greatly esteemed the king's feast, nor drunk the wine of the drink-offerings.

Neither had thine handmaid any joy, since the day that I was brought hither to this present, but in thee, O LORD GOD of Abraham.

O thou mighty GOD above all, hear the voice of the forlorn, and deliver us out of the hands of the mischievous, and deliver me out of my fear.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Mordecai's prayer was admirably suited to the occasion, and shews him to have been a truly pious man, very zealous for the honour of GOD, and the prosperity of Israel. The melancholy occasion justified the violence of his grief; for supposing that he could by means of the queen have used interest to secure his own life, how could he sustain, without the utmost distress of mind, the thoughts of the miserable end to which thousands of those to whom he was united in faith, were condemned.

Mordecai's expostulations, in his last message to the queen, shew, that he had a strong faith in the power of GOD, and an earnest expectation that the LORD would, in remembrance of His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, extend His compassion to their afflicted race, in this time of extreme danger. He considered the advancement of Esther to the crown, as the work of PROVIDENCE, that she might be an instrument of good to her people; and therefore urged her to take an unprecedented measure, trusting to the Divine blessing on her pious endeavours.—The laws of Persia forbade her approach to Ahasuerus; but the Divine law required that she should let slip no opportunity of serving her GOD, and her country.

As soon as Esther was convinced that it was her duty to exert her influence with the king, she resolved to hazard her life, rather than neglect it. But knowing that the hearts of monarchs are under the rule and governance of the SUPREME BEING, she wisely determined to commend herself and her people to the protection of GOD, and to require her attendants to join with her; from which we may infer, that she wished, not only to offer her own supplication in private, but to co-operate with that public humiliation, which the exigence
of

of the case required.—Having taken these resolutions, she resigned herself to the disposal of heaven.

With what true humility and piety did Esther offer up supplications and intercessions to the throne of grace.—From her prayer, it evidently appears that she had not been a candidate for royalty, through any desire of earthly grandeur; on the contrary, the crown which adorned her temples, was considered by her as a mark of ignominy, since it distinguished her to the world as the consort of an heathen prince.—Not all the pleasures of a luxurious court had any charms for her; she experienced no joy, but that which she so ardently sought, by pouring out her soul in pious adoration to the LORD GOD of her fathers.

The situation in which Esther was placed, exposed her to many temptations; but, by the aid of Divine grace, she was enabled to resist them all, and to leave to the world, a shining example of FEMALE PATRIOTISM.

S E C T. C.

ESTHER GOES INTO THE PRESENCE OF AHASUERUS.

AND upon the third day, when Esther had ended her prayer, she laid away her mourning garments, and put on her glorious apparel.

And being gloriously adorned, after she had called upon GOD, who is the beholder and saviour of all things, she took two maids with her.

And upon the one she leaned, as carrying herself daintily.

R 2

And

And the other followed, bearing up her train.

And she was ruddy through the perfection of her beauty, and her countenance was chearful, and very amiable; but her heart was in anguish for fear.

Then having passed through all the doors, she stood before the king, who sat upon his royal throne, and was clothed with all his robes of majesty, all glittering with gold and precious stones; and he was very dreadful.

Then lifting up his countenance that shone with majesty, he looked very fiercely upon her: and the queen fell down, and was pale, and fainted, and bowed herself upon the hand of the maid that went before her.

Then GOD changed the spirit of the king into mildness, who in a fear leaped from his throne, and took her in his arms, till she came to herself again, and comforted her with loving words, and said unto her, Esther, what is the matter? I am thy brother, be of good cheer. Thou shalt not die, though our commandment be general: come near.

And so he held up his golden sceptre, and laid it upon her neck, and embraced her, and said, Speak unto me.

Then she said unto him, I saw thee, my lord, as an angel of GOD, and my heart was troubled for fear of thy majesty.

For wonderful art thou, lord, and thy countenance is full of grace. †

And

And as she was speaking, she fell down for faintness.

Then the king was troubled, and all his servants comforted her.

Then said the king unto her, What wilt thou queen Esther? and what is thy request? it shall be even given thee to the half of the kingdom.

And Esther answered, If it seem good unto the king, let the king and Haman come this day unto the banquet that I have prepared for him.

Then the king said, Cause Haman to make haste that he may do as Esther hath said. So the king and Haman came to the banquet that Esther had prepared.

And the king said unto Esther at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee; and what is thy request? even to the half of the kingdom it shall be performed.

Then answered Esther, and said, My petition and my request is, If I have found favour in the sight of the king, and if it please the king to grant my petition, and to perform my request, let the king and Haman come to the banquet that I shall prepare for them, and I will do to-morrow as the king hath said.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a beautiful description is given in the beginning of this section, of Esther's approach to king Ahasuerus! While her heart, with truly feminine softness, trembled for fear, she assumed a chearful countenance, that she might not, by an

appearance of timidity, impresses the king with an idea that she was going to make an improper request.—The trial was however too great for her delicate frame to sustain.—The stern countenance of the king overcame her resolution—she fainted under the terror of his looks; but her amiable emotion was more powerful than eloquence,—it spoke to the heart of the stern monarch, and he, who had banished one queen for refusing to obey his unreasonable command, was subdued by the gentleness of another, so as to give an unreserved promise of granting all she could desire.—Scarcely recovered from her violent agitation of spirits, Esther thought it prudent to defer making her request known, till she could do it with composure.—She also disdained to accuse the absent, and judged it adviseable to explain her wishes to the king, in those hours, when, retired from state affairs, it was his usual custom to unbend his mind at the social board, with his favorite Haman.

This part of Esther's history affords a striking example of the force of female gentleness, which should recommend the practice of it to every woman. There is a certain sense of superiority in the hearts of men, which, it is the *duty*, and, I may say, the *interest* of wives to gratify; for it was implanted by Heaven, and those who possess it not, are seldom fit to govern their families, or afford to their wives that protection which they may frequently stand in need of.

Esther's example is also worthy of imitation in another particular: she assumed an amiable and chearful countenance, and certainly intended to address her king and husband with gentle persuasion.—The faintings, which prevented her doing so, were *accidental*, and by no means the effect of artifice or affectation.—It seems that at the banquet her courage again failed her, which occasioned the procrastination of her petition to another day.

S E C T. C I.

HAMAN'S PRIDE ERECTETH A GALLOWS FOR MORDECAI.

THEN went Haman forth that day joyful, and with a glad heart; but when Haman saw Mordecai in the king's gate, that he stood not up nor moved for him, he was full of indignation against Mordecai.

Nevertheless, Haman refrained himself; and when he came home, he sent and called for his friends, and Zereſh his wife.

And Haman told them of the glory of his riches, and the multitude of his children, and all the things wherein the king had promoted him, and how he had advanced him above the princes and ſervants of the king.

Haman ſaid moreover, Yea, Eſther the queen did let no man come in with the king unto the banquet that ſhe had prepared, but myſelf; and to-morrow am I invited unto her alſo with the king.

Yet all this availeth me nothing, ſo long as I ſee Mordecai the Jew ſitting at the king's gate.

Then ſaid Zereſh his wife, and all his friends unto him, Let a gallows be made of fifty cubits high, and to-morrow ſpeak thou unto the king that Mordecai may be hanged thereon; then go thou in merrily with

the king unto the banquet. And the thing pleased Haman, and he caused the gallows to be made.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

* From this account of Haman we learn, that the happiness of men depends more upon the state of their own minds, than on any external circumstances. Inordinate passions are the great disturbers of life; and unless we possess a good conscience, and a well governed mind, discontent will blast every enjoyment, and the highest prosperity will prove only disguised misery. Let us then fix this conclusion in our minds, that the destruction of our virtue is the destruction of our peace. *Let us keep our hearts with all diligence, govern them with the greatest care, for out of them are the issues of life.* In no station, in no period, should we think ourselves secure from the dangers which spring from our passions, for they beset every station from youth to grey hairs, and from the peasant to the prince. At first setting out in life, especially, when yet unacquainted with the world and its snares, when every pleasure enchants with its smile, and every object shines with the gloss of novelty, youth should beware of the seducing appearances which surround them, and recollect what others have suffered from the power of headstrong desire. Pride, in particular, is of a most dangerous tendency, and prosperity is too apt to produce it; when once indulged, there is no knowing to what enormities it will lead. Haman was not delivered up all

* The annotations to this section are taken from an excellent sermon by Dr. Blair, on this subject, which may be read with great advantage, as a farther comment on this striking passage.

at once to the madness of revenge. His passions rose with the tide of prosperity, and pride completed what prosperity had begun.

S E C T. CII.

MORDECAI HONOURED—HAMAN HANGED.

ON that night could not the king sleep, and he commanded to bring the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king.

And it was found written that Mordecai had told of Bigthan and Tereſh, two of the king's chamberlains, the keepers of the door, who ſought to lay hand on the king Ahafuerus.

And the king ſaid, What honour and dignity hath been done to Mordecai for this? Then ſaid the king's ſervants that miniſtered unto him, There is nothing done for him.

And the king ſaid, Who is in the court? Now Haman was come into the outward court of the king's houſe, to ſpeak unto the king to hang Mordecai on the gallows that he had prepared for him.

And the king's ſervants ſaid unto him, Behold, Haman ſtandeth in the court. And the king ſaid, Let him come in.

So Haman came in. And the king ſaid unto him, What ſhall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour? Now Haman thought in his heart,

To whom would the king delight to do honour more than to myself?

And Haman answered the king, For the man whom the king delighteth to honour, Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head :

And let this apparel and horse be delivered to the hand of one of the king's most noble princes, that they may array the man withal whom the king delighteth to honour, and bring him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaim before him, Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

Then the king said to Haman, Make haste, and take the apparel and the horse, as thou hast said, and do even so to Mordecai the Jew, that sitteth at the king's gate : let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.

Then took Haman the apparel and the horse, and arrayed Mordecai, and brought him on horseback through the street of the city, and proclaimed before him, Thus shall be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honour.

And Mordecai came again to the king's gate. But Haman hastened to his house mourning, and having his head covered.

And Haman told Zeresh his wife and all his friends every thing that had befallen him. Then said his
wife

wife men and Zeresh his wife unto him, If Mordecai be of the seed of the Jews, before whom thou hast begun to fall, thou shalt not prevail against him, but shalt surely fall before him.

And while they were yet talking with him, came the king's chamberlains, and hasted to bring Haman unto the banquet that Esther had prepared.

So the king and Haman came to banquet with Esther the queen.

And the king said again unto Esther on the second day at the banquet of wine, What is thy petition, queen Esther? and it shall be granted thee: and what is thy request? and it shall be performed, even to the half of the kingdom.

Then Esther the queen answered and said, If I have found favour in thy sight, O king, and if it please the king, let my life be given me at my petition, and my people at my request:

For we are sold, I and my people, to be destroyed, to be slain, and to perish. But if we had been sold for bondmen and bondwomen, I had held my tongue, although the enemy could not countervail the king's damage.

Then the king Ahafuerus answered and said unto Esther the queen, Who is he, and where is he, that durst presume in his heart to do so?

And Esther said, The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman. Then Haman was afraid before the king and queen.

And the king arising from the banquet of wine in his wrath went into the palace garden : and Haman stood up to make request for his life to Esther the queen ; for he saw that there was evil determined against him by the king.

Then the king returned out of his palace garden into the place of the banquet of wine, and at the king's command they covered Haman's face.

And Harbonah, one of the chamberlains, said before the king, Behold also, the gallows fifty cubits high, which Haman had made for Mordecai, who had spoken good for the king, standeth in the house of Haman. Then the king said, Hang him thereon.

So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then was the king's wrath pacified.

On that day did the king Ahasuerus give the house of Haman the Jew's enemy unto Esther the queen. And Mordecai came before the king ; for Esther had told what he was unto her.

And the king took off his ring which he had taken from Haman, and gave it unto Mordecai. And Esther set Mordecai over the house of Haman.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It must doubtless be considered as an interposition of PROVIDENCE, and not the effect of chance, that the king could not sleep, that he should send for the records, and that they should be opened at so critical a place. Haman's mortification
and

and subsequent punishment bear evident marks of Divine judgments, and afford a warning to all, who indulge in their minds the malignant passions of hatred and revenge. On the other hand, the honours which were paid to Mordecai, and his future advancement, plainly shew that the LORD is ever at hand to maintain the cause of his faithful servants, and is not only able to defeat the schemes of the wicked, but to turn that mischief upon their own heads, which they designed for others. In this case there was no miracle; all was brought about apparently in the usual course of human affairs, which gives particular encouragement to good people, who live under a dispensation, in which miracles are not to be expected.

There was admirable propriety in Esther's answer to king Ahasuerus, and her accusation of Haman was noble and just. She gave him an opportunity of justifying himself, if he had any excuse to offer for abusing the confidence which his monarch had reposed in him.—What repeated mortifications did Haman's pride endure! Before he could recover from that of paying homage to Mordecai, he was obliged to become a suppliant for his life to Esther, and even this was not enough: the loss of his sovereign's favour, and the sentence of death suddenly followed; and he who in the morning boasted of the glory of his riches, and his exalted station, was now suspended as a common malefactor, on that very gallows which his malice had caused to be erected for Mordecai.—How justly may the words of the royal psalmist be applied to this portion of sacred history, *I have seen the wicked in great power and spreading himself like a green bay-tree; yet he passed away, and lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.—Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace. The transgressors shall be destroyed together,—The end of the wicked shall be cut off—But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD; He is their strength in the time of trouble.*

ble. And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them; He shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they put their trust in Him.

S E C T. CIII.

THE KING'S LETTER IN FAVOUR OF THE JEWS.

AND Esther spake yet again before the king, and fell down at his feet, and besought him with tears, to put away the mischief of Haman the Agagite, and his device that he had devised against the Jews.

Then the king held out the golden sceptre toward Esther. So Esther arose, and stood before the king.

And said, If it please the king, and if I have found favour in his sight, and the thing seem right before the king, and I be pleasing in his eyes: let it be written to reverse the letters devised by Haman the son of Hammedatha the Agagite, which he wrote to destroy the Jews which are in all the king's provinces:

For how can I endure to see the evil that shall come unto my people? or how can I endure to see the destruction of my kindred?

Then the king Ahasuerus said unto Esther the queen, and to Mordecai the Jew, Behold: I have given Esther the house of Haman, and him they have hanged upon the gallows, because he laid his hand upon the Jews.

Write

Write ye also for the Jews, as it liketh you, in the king's name, and seal it with the king's ring: for the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, may no man reverse.

Then were the king's scribes called at that time in the third month, that is the month Siyan, on the three and twentieth day thereof; and it was written, according to all that Mordecai commanded unto the Jews, and to the lieutenants, and the deputies, and rulers of the provinces which are from India unto Ethiopia, an hundred twenty and seven provinces unto every province according to the writing thereof, and unto every people after their language, and to the Jews according to their writing, and according to their language.

And he wrote in the king Ahafuerus' name, and sealed it with the king's ring, and sent letters by posts on horse-back, and riders on mules, camels and young dromedaries:

Wherein the king granted the Jews which were in every city, to gather themselves together, and to stand for their life, to destroy, to slay, and to cause to perish all the power of the people and province that would assault them, both little ones and women, and to take the spoil of them for a prey.

Upon one day, in all the provinces of king Ahafuerus, namely, upon the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month Adar.

The copy of the writing, for a commandment to be given in every province, was published unto all people,

ple, and that the Jews should be ready against that day to avenge themselves on their enemies.

So the posts that rode upon mules and camels went out, being hastened, and pressed on by the king's commandment. And the decree was given at Shushan the palace.

And the letter was as follows :

The great king Artaxerxes, unto the princes and governors of an hundred and seven and twenty provinces from India unto Ethiopia, and unto all our faithful subjects, greeting.

Many, the more often they are honoured with the great bounty of their gracious princes, the more proud they are waxen ; And endeavour to hurt not our subjects only, but not being able to bear abundance, do take in hand to practice also against those that do them good :

And take not only thankfulness away from among men, but also lifted up with the glorious words of lewd persons that were never good, they think to escape the justice of GOD, that seeth all things, and hateth evil.

Oftentimes also fair speech of those that are put in trust to manage their friends affairs, hath caused many that are in authority to be partakers of innocent blood, and hath enwrapped them in remediless calamities.

Beguiling with the falshood and deceit of their lewd disposition, the innocency and goodness of princes.

Now ye may see this, as we have declared, not so much by antient histories, as ye may, if ye search what
hath

hath been wickedly done of late, through the pestilent behaviour of them that are unworthily placed in authority.

And we must take care for the time to come, that our kingdom may be quiet and peaceable for all men; Both by changing our purposes, and always judging things that are evident, with more equal proceeding.

For Haman a Macedonian, the son of Hammadatha, being indeed a stranger from the Persian blood, and far distant from our goodness, and as a stranger received of us, had so far forth obtained the favour that we shew toward every nation, as that he was called our father, and was continually honoured of all men, as the next person unto the king.

But he, not bearing his great dignity, went about to deprive us of our kingdom and life: having, by manifold and cunning deceits, sought of us the destruction as well of Mordecai, who saved our life, and continually procured our good, as also of blameless Esther, partaker of our kingdom, with their whole nation.

For by these means he thought, finding us destitute of friends, to have translated the kingdom of the Persians to the Macedonians.

But we find that the Jews, whom this wicked wretch hath delivered to utter destruction, are no evil doers, but live by most just laws: And that they be children of the most high and most mighty living
God,

GOD, who hath ordered the kingdom both unto us and to our progenitors in the most excellent manner.

Wherefore ye shall do well, not to put in execution the letters sent unto you by Haman the son of Hammedatha.

For he that was the worker of these things is hanged at the gates of Susa with all his family; GOD who ruleth all things, speedily rendering vengeance to him according to his deserts.

Therefore ye shall publish the copy of this letter in all places, that the Jews may freely live after their own laws.

And ye shall aid them, that even the same day, being the thirteenth day of the twelfth month Adar, they may be avenged on them, who, in the time of their affliction shall set upon them.

For Almighty GOD hath turned to joy unto them the day, wherein the chosen people should have perished.

Ye shall therefore among your solemn feasts keep it an high day with all feasting: That both now and hereafter there may be safety to us, and the well-affected Persians, but to those which do conspire against us, a memorial of destruction.

Therefore every city and country whatsoever, which shall not do according to these things shall be destroyed without mercy, with fire and sword, and shall be made not only unpassable for men, but also most hateful to wild beasts and fowls for ever.

And

And Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, and with a great crown of gold, and with a garment of fine linen, and purple: and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad.

The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour.

And in every province and in every city, whithersoever the king's commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day. And many of the people of the land became Jews; for the fear of the Jews fell upon them.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

Esther had a greater object in view than the downfall of Haman. This was but a necessary prelude to the design she had formed for effecting the deliverance of her countrymen, whom his malice had devoted to destruction. She therefore renewed her petition to the king, that he would compleat the good work he had begun; and employed the most powerful arguments to incline him, in tender compassion to her, to save the Jews. Ahasuerus kept his royal word. He granted her request to the full extent of her wishes; and as he had reason to suppose many of his subjects would take advantage of his first decree, which was issued by Haman (which he could not reverse) and attack the Jews, he issued another, by which he gave them liberty to defend their lives and properties. It is likely that this counteracting of a decree, a thing unusual in Persia, occasioned much commotion in the state; and it is not at all improbable that Haman had actually formed a conspiracy for transferring the kingdom

kingdom to the Greeks, as was hinted in the letters which were sent to the provinces in the king's name.

What a happy, as well as astonishing revolution now took place in favour of the Jews! Well might they rejoice and be glad, at this fresh proof of the faithfulness of the LORD GOD, who, according to his Divine promise to Moses, had compassion upon them in the land of their captivity, whenever they called upon Him with all their heart, and with all their soul.

S E C T. CIV.

THE JEWS SLAY THEIR ENEMIES----HAMAN'S SONS HANGED--MORDECAI'S ADVANCEMENT.

NOW in the twelfth month (that is the month Adar) on the thirteenth day of the same, when the king's commandment and his decree drew near to be put in execution, in the day that the enemies of the Jews hoped to have power over them, (though it was turned to the contrary that the Jews had rule over them that hated them).

The Jews gathered themselves together in their cities, throughout all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, to lay hand on such as sought their hurt; and no man could withstand them: for the fear of them fell upon all people.

And all the rulers of the provinces, and the lieutenants, and the deputies, and officers of the king, helped the Jews: because the fear of Mordecai fell upon them.

For

For Mordecai was great in the king's house, and his fame went out throughout all the provinces: for this man Mordecai waxed greater and greater.

Thus the Jews smote all their enemies with the stroke of the sword, and slaughter, and destruction, and did what they would unto those that hated them.

And in Shushan the palace the Jews slew and destroyed five hundred men.

The ten sons of Haman the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews, slew they; but on the spoil laid they not their hand.

On that day, the number of those that were slain in Shushan the palace, was brought before the king.

And the king said unto Esther the queen, The Jews have slain and destroyed five hundred men in Shushan the palace, and the ten sons of Haman; what have they done in the rest of the king's provinces? now what is thy petition? and it shall be granted thee: or what is thy request further? and it shall be done.

Then said Esther, If it please the king, let it be granted to the Jews which are in Shushan, to do tomorrow also according unto this day's decree, and let Haman's ten sons be hanged upon the gallows.

And the king commanded it so to be done; and the decree was given at Shushan, and they hanged Haman's ten sons.

For the Jews that were in Shushan gathered themselves together on the fourteenth day also of the month
Adar,

Adar, and slew three hundred men at Shushan ; but on the prey they laid not their hand.

But the other Jews that were in the king's provinces, gathered themselves together, and stood for their lives, and had rest from their enemies, and slew of their foes seventy and five thousand ; but they laid not their hands on the prey.

On the thirteenth day of the month Adar, and on the fourteenth day of the same, rested they, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

But the Jews that were at Shushan, assembled together on the thirteenth day thereof, and on the fourteenth thereof ; and on the fifteenth day of the same they rested, and made it a day of feasting and gladness.

Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwall'd towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar, a day of gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

And Mordecai wrote these things, and sent letters unto all the Jews that were in all the provinces of the king Ahasuerus, both nigh and far.

To stablish this among them, that they should keep the fourteenth day of the month Adar, and the fifteenth day of the same yearly :

As the days wherein the Jews rested from their enemies, and the month which was turned unto them from sorrow to joy, and from mourning into a good day : that they should make them days of feasting and joy,

joy, and of sending portions one to another, and gifts to the poor.

And the Jews undertook to do as they had begun, and as Mordecai had written unto them.

And the king Ahasuerus laid a tribute upon the land, and upon the isles of the sea.

And all the acts of his power, and of his might, and the declaration of the greatness of Mordecai, whereunto the king advanced him, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia?

For Mordecai the Jew was next unto king Ahasuerus, and great among the Jews, and accepted of the multitude of his brethren, seeking the wealth of his people, and speaking peace to all his feed.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The contest between the Jews and the Persians was a very extraordinary one, each party being authorised by a royal decree; had the former been peaceable, no mischief would have ensued.

The sons of Haman were eager for revenge; and they had a strong party on their side; they attacked the Jews, who were obliged to kill them in their own defence.—It seems as if their enemies were struck with that fear, which is usually styled in scripture, the *terror of the LORD*; on the other hand, the Jews were strengthened, so that nothing could withstand them.

Esther was of too gentle a disposition to desire another day's slaughter, from sanguinary motives; but, without doubt, she was

was apprized by Mordecai, that it was necessary for the utter destruction of those who would have continually molested the Jews, and disturbed the peace of the state.—It is supposed that the greater number of those who were slain, were Amalekites; Haman's sons certainly were so, which is a sufficient reason for Esther's desiring to have their dead bodies hung up, as a terror to others.

It is observable, that though the king's decree authorized the Jews to *take the spoil of their enemies for a prey*, and they had a fair opportunity for enriching themselves; yet they forbore to do so, in order to shew, that they acted upon religious principles, and had nothing in view but to save their lives, not to make their fortunes. They slew none but those who took arms against them.

It was in order to perpetuate the remembrance of the signal mercies the Jews had received for the honour of God, that Mordecai wrote letters, and instituted an annual festival.—It is still observed among the Jews, but usually in a very riotous manner.

The way in which Mordecai recommended it to be kept, is deserving of particular attention, namely, in feasting and joy, of which the poor were to be made partakers, through the bounty of the rich. “Thanksgiving and almsgiving ought always to go together.”

From this section we learn that Mordecai continued good after he became great, and that, instead of seeking his own wealth, he had a constant regard to the welfare of his brethren, for whose sake the LORD graciously exalted him in the Persian court.

The book shews us how kindly God watched over these Jews, who did not return out of the land of their captivity with the rest. As they had not zeal enough for the Holy City and Temple to encounter the difficulties of a removal thither, one would have supposed that they would have been excluded
from

from the especial providence of God; but we find, that even those who were scattered among the provinces of the heathen were taken care of, as well as those who were gathered together in the land of Judea, and were wonderfully preserved when doomed to destruction, like sheep appointed to be slain. Let us now return to the people in Judea.

S E C T. CV.

THE COMMISSION OF ARTAXERXES TO EZRA.

NOW after these things Ezra the son of Seraiah, the son of Azariah the son of Hilkiah.

The son of Shallum, the son of Zadok, the son of Ahitub, the son of Amariah, the son of Azariah, the son Meraioth, the son of Zeraiyah, the son of Uzzi, the son of Bukki,

The son of Abishua, the son of Phinehas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the chief priest:

This Ezra went up from Babylon; and he was a ready scribe in the law of Moses, which the LORD God of Israel had given: and the king granted him all his request, according to the hand of the LORD his God upon him.

And there went up some of the children of Israel, and of the priests, and the Levites, and the singers and the porters, and the Nethinims, unto Jerusalem, in the seventh year of Artaxerxes the king.

And he came to Jerusalem in the fifth month, which was in the seventh year of the king.

For upon the first day of the month began he to go up from Babylon, and on the first day of the fifth month came he to Jerusalem, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the LORD, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and judgments.

Now this is the copy of the letter that the king Artaxerxes gave unto Ezra the priest, the scribe, even a scribe of the words of the commandments of the LORD, and of his statutes to Israel.

Artaxerxes, king of kings, unto Ezra the priest, a scribe of the law of the God of heaven, perfect peace, and at such a time.

I make a decree, that all they of the people of Israel, and of his priests and Levites, in my realm, which are minded of their own freewill to go up to Jerusalem, go with thee.

Forasmuch as thou art sent of the king, and of his seven counsellors, to enquire concerning Judah and Jerusalem, according to the law of thy God which is in thine hand ;

And to carry the silver and gold, which the king and his counsellors have freely offered unto the God of Israel, whose habitation is in Jerusalem,

And all the silver and gold that thou canst find in all the province of Babylon, with the freewill offering of the people, and of the priests, offering willingly for the house of their God which is in Jerusalem.

That

That thou mayest buy speedily with this money, bullocks, rams, lambs, with their meat-offerings, and their drink-offerings, and offer them upon the altar of the house of your GOD which is in Jerusalem.

And whatsoever shall seem good to thee, and to thy brethren, to do with the rest of the silver and the gold, that to do after the will of your GOD.

The vessels also that are given thee for the service of the house of thy GOD, those deliver thou before the GOD of Jerusalem.

And whatsoever more shall be needful for the house of GOD, which thou shalt have occasion to bestow, bestow it out of the king's treasure house.

And I, even I Artaxerxes the king, do make a decree to all the treasurers which are beyond the river, that whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the GOD of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily,

Unto an hundred talents of silver, and to an hundred measures of wheat, and to an hundred baths of wine, and to an hundred baths of oil, and salt without prescribing how much.

Whatsoever is commanded by the GOD of heaven, let it be diligently done for the house of the GOD of heaven: for why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons?

Also we certify you, that touching any of the priests and Levites, singers, porters, Nethinims, or

ministers of this house of GOD, it shall not be lawful to impose toll, tribute, or custom, upon them.

And thou Ezra, after the wisdom of thy GOD that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy GOD; and teach ye them that know them not.

And whosoever will not do the law of thy GOD, and the law of the king, let judgment be executed speedily upon him, whether it be unto death, or to banishment, or to confiscation of goods, or to imprisonment.

And when Ezra had obtained this letter, he said, blessed be the LORD GOD of our fathers, which hath put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem;

And hath extended mercy unto me before the king and his counsellors, and before all the king's mighty princes: and I was strengthened as the hand of the LORD my GOD was upon me; and I gathered together out of Israel chief men to go up with me.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

It may be inferred from this section that Ezra took advantage of the favourable disposition which Artaxerxes (or Ahasuerus) through the mediation of Esther and Mordecai, entertained for the Jews, and requested that those, who remained in subjection to him, might join their brethren in Judea, who had formerly gone by the permission of Cyrus.

One

One could scarcely have expected, that a heathen prince would have made such provision for the Temple service, or expressed himself in terms of reverence and respect to God; but this circumstance is an additional confirmation of what has been before observed, that those idolators, at least, who presided over great kingdoms, were, by some providential mean or other, made acquainted with the sovereignty of the LORD JEHOVAH, and so far acknowledged his power, that they were willing to be at any expence to purchase his favour.

S U P P L E M E N T.

As soon as Ezra had received the king's letter, he made known its contents; and in a short time assembled together one thousand four hundred and ninety-six men, beside women and children, amongst whom were two priests, and about forty Levites. They were very likely to be attacked by enemies in the way, especially as they carried treasures with them, yet Ezra would not ask for guards; instead of that, he and the people had recourse to prayer and fasting, in order to engage the protection of God; for Ezra had declared to the king, that *the hand of the LORD was upon all those for good that sought Him; but His power and His wrath against them that forsook him.* And therefore he was, as he said, ashamed to require a band of soldiers to protect them from their enemies in the way. The measure he pursued was certainly much the best. And it pleased God to reward the faith of him and his companions by the comforts of his HOLY SPIRIT, so that they arrived in safety at Jerusalem. The whole company, which consisted of a mixture of the ten tribes, offered sacrifices; and when they had shewed their commissions, gave assistance to the work.

In the second year of Ezra's government, complaint was made that many of the people, and even some of the priests, had married heathen wives, contrary to the law; this filled him with grief and consternation, for he was apprehensive that they would again return to idolatry. As soon as it was reported that Ezra was in such affliction, there assembled unto him a great congregation, who mixed their tears with his, and it was immediately determined that they should enter into COVENANT with GOD, to put away these wives, which was accordingly done; but without doubt they were properly provided for. About one hundred and thirty persons only had transgressed in this particular; but had the affair not been attended to in time, it would in all probability have proved the destruction of the nation; and it was better that a small number should suffer at first, than that they should have their religion corrupted.

About the twelfth year of the reign of Artaxerxes Joachim, the high-priest of the Jews, died; he was succeeded in his office by Eliahab his son.

Before Ezra came to Jerusalem, the scriptures were in a manner lost, the people ignorant of the law, the worship of GOD neglected, and every thing, both in church and state, in great disorder. He continued in his government some years, and wrought great reformation; and made it his particular endeavour to produce a correct copy of the HOLY SCRIPTURES; that is to say, all the books of which they then consisted, which he divided into three parts, the LAW, the PROPHETS, and the HOLY WRITINGS, viz. the Psalms, &c. for that purpose he collected together all the copies of the sacred books with which he could meet, that by comparing them, he might discover the mistakes of different transcribers. Originally every book of the Hebrew Bible was written without any division into chapters and verses; but it is supposed that Ezra divided the law into fifty-four sections, and that he
added

added the last chapter of Deuteronomy, and other parts which appeared necessary for connection and illustration.

In the twenty-ninth year of the reign of Artaxerxes, Ezra resigned the government of Judea to Nehemiah; but still continued to instruct the people as an expounder of the law, and a preacher of righteousness.

S E C T. CVI.

NEHEMIAH'S AFFLICTION, AND INTERCESSION FOR THE JEWS.

IT came to pass that as Nehemiah the king's cup-bearer, was in Shushan, the palace, that Hanani one of his brethren, and others, came unto him, and he asked them concerning the Jews that had escaped, which were left of the captivity, and concerning Jerusalem.

And they said unto him, The remnant that are left of the captivity there in the province are in great affliction and reproach: the wall of Jerusalem also is broken down, and the gates thereof are burned with fire.

And it came to pass when Nehemiah heard these words, that he sat down, and wept and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven, and said, I beseech thee, O LORD GOD of heaven, the great and terrible God, that keepeth covenant and mercy for them that love him and observe thy commandments:

Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now day and night for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned.

We have dealt very corruptly against thee, and have not kept the commandments, nor the statutes, nor the judgments, which thou commandest thy servant Moses.

Remember, I beseech thee, the word that thou commandest thy servant Moses, saying, If ye transgress I will scatter you abroad among the nations:

But if ye turn unto me, and keep my commandments, and do them, though there were of you cast out unto the uttermost part of the heaven, yet will I gather them from thence, and will bring them unto the place that I have chosen to set my name there.

Now these are thy servants and thy people, whom thou hast redeemed by thy great power, and by thy strong hand.

O LORD, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive to the prayer of thy servant, and to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name: and prosper, I pray thee, thy servant this day, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man.

And it came to pass that shortly after wine was before the king: and Nehemiah took up the wine, and gave it to the king: Now he had not before-time
been

been sad in his presence. Wherefore the king said unto him, Why is thy countenance sad, seeing thou art not sick? This is nothing else but sorrow of heart. Then was Nehemiah fore afraid.

And said unto the king, Let the king live for ever: why should not my countenance be sad, when the city, the place of my father's sepulchres, lieth waste, and the gates thereof are consumed with fire?

Then the king said unto him, For what dost thou make request? So Nehemiah prayed in his heart the God of heaven to direct him.

And said unto the king, If it please the king, and if thy servant have found favour in thy sight, that thou wouldest send me unto Judah, unto the city of my fathers' sepulchres, that I may build it.

And the king said unto him, the queen also sitting by him, For how long shall thy journey be? and when wilt thou return? So it pleased the king to send him; and Nehemiah fixed a time.

Moreover he said unto the king, If it please the king, let letters be given me to the governors beyond the river, that they may convey me over till I come into Judah;

And a letter unto Asaph the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the palace which appertained to the house, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall enter into. And the king granted him, according to the good hand of his God upon him.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

NEHEMIAH was a Jew, whose ancestors had formerly been citizens of Jerusalem; but who having obtained a good settlement in the land of their captivity, staid there in preference to returning with their brethren. His office as *cup-bearer* to king Artaxerxes, was both an honourable and profitable place, and Nehemiah had accumulated a very great fortune; yet he was so far from being insensible to the distresses of his countrymen, that when he was told that they were continually exposed to danger, derision and contempt, on account of their city being defenceless, he felt their sorrows with the tenderest sympathy, and implored the LORD with the most earnest supplication, to incline the heart of Artaxerxes to favour his people, and then resolved to petition the king in their behalf. The LORD lent a gracious ear to his humble request; and Artaxerxes not only granted a decree to repair the walls and gates of Jerusalem, but sent Nehemiah thither as governor, to see it put into execution.

It is worthy of remark, that God always finds proper instruments to perform the work of His providence, and frequently makes the enemies of His church guards and protectors to its friends and patrons.

S E C T. CVII.

NEHEMIAH ARRIVES AT JERUSALEM.—HE INCITETH THE JEWS TO REBUILD THE WALLS.

THEN came Nehemiah to the governors beyond the river, and gave them the king's letters.
Now

Now the king had sent captains of the army, and horsemen with me.

When Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, heard of it, it grieved them exceedingly, that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel.

So Nehemiah came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And he arose in the night, and some few men with him: neither told he any man what his God had put into his heart to do at Jerusalem: neither was there any beast with him, save the beast that he rode upon.

And he went out by night by the gate of the valley, even before the dragon well, and to the dung port, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire.

Then he went on to the gate of the fountain, and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under him to pass.

Then he went up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall, and turned back, and entered by the gate of the valley, and so returned.

And the rulers knew not whither he went, or what he did: neither had he as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said he unto them, Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates

thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach.

The hand of my God is with me; as also the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for this good work.

But when Sanballat the Horonite, and Tobiah the servant, the Ammonite, and Geshem the Arabian, heard it, they laughed them to scorn, and despised them and said, What is this thing that ye do? will ye rebel against the king?

Then answered Nehemiah, and said unto them, The God of heaven, he will prosper us: therefore we his servants will arise and build: but ye have no portion, nor right, nor memorial in Jerusalem.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

We find from this section, that Nehemiah, having once taken up the idea of serving his brethren the Jews, never lost sight of his pious and generous design.

It seems that the agitation of his mind was perceived by the king, who appears to have been glad of giving to his beloved Esther a fresh proof of his kindness to her people.

Nehemiah did not proceed in the business with haste and precipitation; for though he trusted that the good Providence of God attended him, he did not expect a miracle to be wrought, where human means, under the Divine blessing, were likely to succeed.

We here learn, that as soon as his design was known, the Ammonites, Moabites, Samaritans, and other neighbouring nations,

nations, joined to oppose it. The ancient enmity of the Samaritans has been already mentioned ; but they had an additional motive in common with the other nations, for oppressing the Jews at present ; and this was, their having all seized upon different parts of the Jewish territories during the captivity, which, on the return of the Jews, they had been obliged to restore ; for this reason, the Samaritans did all in their power to prevent the settlement of the Jews, hoping they should find an opportunity of resuming the prey they had lost.

S U P P L E M E N T.

Nehemiah was not discouraged by these malicious enemies, nor by the insinuations of disaffected people and false prophets within the walls, but resolutely persisted ; and the people used their utmost exertions, laying their weapons by them, and working and standing guard alternately, by which means they accomplished the work in fifty-two days. Nehemiah and the rulers, during this time, did not even pull off their cloaths, but to change them for clean ones.

After this, Nehemiah relieved the poor from the oppression of the rich, who having lent them money to supply their necessities, had exacted great interest ; to pay which they had been obliged to mortgage their lands, and even give up their children to servitude. Shortly after, he returned into Persia, to acquaint the king of his success, obtained a new commission, and, with the assistance of Ezra, set about a farther reformation of the church and state ; and as Jerusalem was but thinly inhabited, they prevailed on the rulers and other great men to build houses and dwell in the city ; and of the common people, every tenth man was taken by lot, and obliged to settle there with their families ; by which means, they were enabled to defend the place against their enemies.

Neh-

Nehemiah next caused the genealogies of the people to be exactly scrutinized, that all might be directed in what parts to take their possessions; and the tribe of Levi to be ascertained, that those who were not of the family of Aaron might be excluded the sanctuary. It is very curious to trace these genealogies, but it would take our attention too long from the history.

Ezra having completed his copy of the *law of God*, and written it out fair in the Chaldee character, read it publicly, as we learn from the following section.

S E C T. CVIII.

THE SOLEMN READING OF THE LAW.

AND all the people gathered themselves together as one man, into the street that was before the water-gate, and they spake unto Ezra the scribe, to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had commanded to Israel.

And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation, both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month.

And he read therein before the street that was before the water-gate, from the morning until mid-day, before the men [and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law.

And

And Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose, and beside him stood Mattithiah, and Shema, and Anaiah, and Urijah, and Hilkiah, and Maaseiah, on his right hand; and on his left hand, Pedaiah, and Misael, and Malchiah, and Hashum, and Hashbadana, Zechariah, and Meshullam.

And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people (for he was above all the people) and when he opened it all the people stood up: And Ezra blessed the LORD the great GOD; and all the people answered, Amen, amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads, and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

And the Levites who stood by Ezra caused the people to understand the law: and the people stood in their place.

So they read in the book in the law of GOD distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.

And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your GOD, mourn not, nor weep: for all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law.

Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto

unto our LORD: neither be you sorry, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

So the Levites stilled all the people, saying, Hold your peace, for the day is holy, neither be ye grieved.

And all the people went their way to eat, and to drink, and to send portions, and to make great mirth because they had understood the words that were declared unto them.

And on the second day were gathered together the chief of the fathers of all the people, the priests and the Levites, unto Ezra the scribe, even to understand the words of the law.

And they found written in the law which the LORD had commanded by Moses, that the children of Israel should dwell in booths, in the feast of the seventh month:

And that they should publish and proclaim in all their cities, and in Jerusalem, saying, Go forth unto the mount, and fetch olive-branches, and pine-branches, and myrtle-branches, and palm-branches, and branches of thick trees to make booths, as it is written.

So the people went forth, and brought them, and made themselves booths, every one upon the roof of his house, and in their courts, and in the courts of the house of God, and in the street of the water-gate, and in the street of the gate of Ephraim.

And all the congregation of them that were come again out of the captivity made booths, and sat under the



the booths: for since the days of Joshua the son of Nun, unto that day, had not the children of Israel done so: and there was very great gladness.

Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God: and they kept the feast seven days, and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The scaffold or pulpit, whence Ezra read the law to the people, was erected in the largest street of the city, probably because the court of the Temple was not capable of containing so great a multitude. He read it in Hebrew, and the Levites repeated it, period by period, to the people, in the Chaldee tongue, which was usually spoken by the Jews at that time; from hence we may infer, that he thought it agreeable to the Divine will that the scriptures should be translated for the use of the common people.

It was a very affecting ceremony to the Jews, and there is no wonder that it caused their tears to flow. The spiritual famine, which the prophet Amos had foretold*, had been of long continuance—the bread of life was now restored to them. Had they set a proper value on it before, it would not have been taken from them; but they slighted the Divine ordinances, till they provoked the LORD to cast a veil over them, which it required a diligent hand, guided by his Holy Spirit, to draw aside.—May all who enjoy the advantage of a translation of those Scriptures, which they have not skill to read in their original language, set as high a value on them, as the Jews at this time did on that which

* Amos viii. 11.

was vouchsafed to them! And may every one, who hears them read, pay the same ready and devout attention to them!

S U P P L E M E N T.

It appears from this section, that the Levites perfectly well understood the conditions of the original covenant, which **GOD** made with Abraham, and were thoroughly convinced, that the **LORD** had faithfully performed His part of it.—After enumerating the various mercies which had been shewed to their nation, and recollecting the disobedience of their forefathers, they acknowledged the wonderful goodness of the **LORD**, and willingly entered into a covenant answerable to that which the house of Israel had formerly been under. It is needless to comment on every part of this covenant; but one particular should not be passed over, namely, the resolution they took, not to buy victuals or exact debts on the Sabbath; the doing such things, unless in cases of absolute necessity, is a profanation of that holy day, which should carefully be avoided, by all those who profess to honour **GOD**.

That the Israelites might no more plead ignorance of the law, in excuse for their sins, they from this time had the Scriptures frequently read and explained to them by the most learned amongst the Levites and other scribes, which at first it is likely they did in the same manner as Ezra; but the inconvenience of standing in the open street in all weathers, suggested the thought of building houses or tabernacles for the purpose; and this seems to have been the original of synagogues, which soon multiplied like our parish-churches; for every town where there were ten persons of full age, and in easy circumstances of life, so as to have leisure to attend the public service, was at liberty to erect one, and

and in each of these synagogues was a copy of the law. The service performed in them consisted of prayers, reading the scriptures, and preaching or expounding them. This was done two days in the week, besides on the sabbath and the festivals. The law being divided into so many sections, as there are weeks in the year, they read half a lesson on Monday morning, and the other half on Thursday morning, and this same lesson they read on the sabbath both morning and afternoon; and when reading of the prophets, was added to reading the law, the same order was observed in respect to them.

The hours of prayer amongst the Jews, whether in their synagogues or private houses, were at the times of offering the morning and evening sacrifices in the Temple; for they supposed that the sacrifices and incense were designed to render God propitious to them, and to make their prayers acceptable. The priests and Levites only officiated in the Temple, but persons of any tribe were appointed for the service of the synagogue by some of the elders of the town, who were called rulers of the synagogue.

Great advantages arose from the practice of building synagogues, and reading and explaining the scriptures, for the Jews never were guilty of idolatry any more; but when they were afterwards scattered into various nations, they erected places for public worship wherever the rulers of the country would permit them. It was also by means of these synagogues that the heathens, where the Jews were dispersed, came to know the true God, and some general principles of virtue and piety.

Nehemiah, after he had been governor of Judea twelve years, returned to the Persian court: he staid about five years in Persia, and then was sent by the king with a fresh commission: during his absence many things had gone wrong, but he exerted his usual zeal to reform all irregularities. About four years after Nehemiah's return to Jerusalem, Artaxerxes died

died in the forty-first year of his reign: during his government, Nehemiah acted with great justice, and supported his office with a very expensive magnificence out of his own private purse. He had, as I said before, amassed great wealth, and thought he could not expend it better than in the service of *GOD and his country*, and in the *promotion of RELIGION*, and *GOD* prospered him accordingly.

Artaxerxes was succeeded by his son Xerxes the second, who was killed by his brother Sogdianus.

Sogdianus was put to death in a cruel manner by his brother Ochus.

Ochus obtained the kingdom, and changed his name to Darius, and is the same whom historians call Darius Nothus.

Nehemiah, during these revolutions, continued still in the government of Judea. Eliashib, the high-priest, died in the 11th year of the reign of Darius Nothus, and was succeeded by Jehoiada.

This king permitted a man named Sanballat, to erect a Temple on mount Gerizim, like that at Jerusalem, and make his son-in-law Manasses, high priest of it. Manasses was one of those Jews who married heathen wives, and resolving not to give up his, had fled from Jerusalem to escape punishment: from this time Samaria became the common refuge and asylum of those Jews who were found guilty of breaking the sabbaths, &c. so that in time the greatest part of its inhabitants were apostate Jews. Those whom Esar-haddon had planted there, worshipped other gods besides the *LORD*; but these did not do so, for a book of the law was carried to Samaria, and publicly read; daily service was also performed there, the same as at Jerusalem: notwithstanding this, the Jews hated the Samaritans above all the people upon earth, and avoided all kind of converse and communication with them.

How long Nehemiah lived at Jerusalem after this, is uncertain, but it is supposed he continued in the government to the
time

time of his death. After him, there seems to have been no governor of Judea, but this country being added to Syria, became wholly subjected to the governor of that province, and under him the high-priest had the charge of regulating all affairs there. Darius Nothus met with great disturbances, and after he had reigned nineteen years died.

Nehemiah's exalted piety, his love for his country, extensive benevolence, judicious liberality, and manly courage, shew his character in a most amiable light, and render him worthy of the imitation of those who are blessed with power and affluence.

Ezra's example is deserving of the consideration of those, whose business it is to instruct others in the *duties of RELIGION*; for he was indefatigable in the study of the scriptures, and took infinite pains to render them intelligible and useful.

It was observed, that the LORD made *two* COVENANTS with ABRAHAM, one relating to TEMPORAL PROSPERITY in the land of Canaan, the other to a general blessing to be conveyed through him to ALL MANKIND. We have seen the completion of the first, in the course of the history of the Israelites from Abraham to king David; and also know that the LORD made a covenant with David, and by what means his descendants forfeited the Divine favour; and that the *Israelites*, for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and the *tribe of Judah*, for the sake of David, were miraculously preserved from utter destruction, although they had so frequently provoked the LORD by disobedience. Notwithstanding the general defection of God's chosen people, there were always some among them who adhered to the Divine law; but these were unavoidably involved in the public calamities which were inflicted on the disobedient; to comfort them therefore, and warn the wicked to return to the LORD, a succession of prophets were sent, who foretold the various revolutions that would happen in the Jewish state, and the heathen

heathen nations, with whom the Israelites were, at different periods, connected. We have read how exactly the predictions respecting the captivity of Israel and Judah were accomplished, and by what wonderful means their restoration to the land of their inheritance was effected; where they were once more governed by their own laws, and allowed to worship God in His holy Temple; but the children of Israel were not yet in so honourable a condition as formerly, being still under subjection to the heathens, and dispersed in different countries. The LORD had therefore graciously provided a continual source of consolation for them, by revealing to the prophets who committed these revelations to writing, that a farther deliverance would be wrought for the remnant of his faithful people, by the coming of the MESSIAH. But we will pass over these prophecies at present, that we may read them with the New Testament, as the history of the events they treat of will be the best comment on them.

Let us now see what Daniel foretold concerning the fall of the Persian empire.

S E C T. CIX.

DANIEL'S VISION OF THE RAM AND THE HE- GOAT.

IN the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar a vision appeared unto me, even unto me Daniel, after that which appeared unto me at the first.

And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when I saw, that I was at Shushan in the palace, which is
in

in the province of Elam; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the river Ulai.

Then I lifted up mine eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river a ram which had two horns; and the two horns were high; but one was higher than the other, and the higher came up last.

I saw the ram pushing westward, and northward, and southward; so that no beasts might stand before him, neither was there any that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and became great.

And as I was considering, behold, an he-goat came from the west on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground: and the goat had a notable horn between his eyes.

And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.

Therefore the he-goat waxed very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken: and for it came up four notable ones toward the four winds of heaven.

And out of one of them came forth a little horn, which waxed exceeding great, toward the south, and toward the east, and toward the pleasant land. And

And it waxed great, even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.

Yea, he magnified himself even to the prince of the host, and by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.

And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practised, and prospered.

Then I heard one faint speaking, and another faint said unto that certain faint which spake, How long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?

And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.

And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.

And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision.

So he came near where I stood: and when he came I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said unto me, Understand, O son of man: for at the time of the end shall be the vision.

Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face toward the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.

And

And he said, Behold, I will make thee know what shall be in the last end of the indignation: for at the time appointed the end shall be.

The ram which thou sawest having two horns, are the kings of Media and Persia.

And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king.

Now that being broken, whereas four stood up for it, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power.

And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up.

And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practise, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people.

And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the PRINCE of princes: but he shall be broken without hand.

And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days.

And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

*This prophecy evidently relates to the Persian and Grecian monarchies. The emblems here given of these kingdoms will appear highly proper, if we consider that a ram or ram's head, was the royal ensign of the Persians; and that the Greeks of Macedonia were called *Ægiadae*, or the people of the goat, for 200 years, before the time of Daniel. Caraunus their founder settled in a place where there was a flock of goats, and from thence called his settlement goat's town, and made the figure of a goat his ensign. We shall soon see how this prophecy was accomplished.

* Dr. Smith's Summary View.

 S U P P L E M E N T.

Artaxerxes-Mnemon, one of the sons of Darius-Nothus, succeeded him in the throne. The reign of this king is long, and full of interesting events, but we must confine ourselves to the Jewish history.

In the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes, died Jehoida the high-priest, who was succeeded by his son Jehonan, called also Jonathan, who held it thirty-two years. Jeshua his brother, by means of the governor of Syria, obtained a grant of the priesthood for himself, and went to take possession; which occasioned a great contention, and Jehonan killed Jeshua in the inner court of the Temple. The governor of Syria was exceedingly enraged at this action, and coming up to Jerusalem, obliged the priests to pay out of the public treasury, a very considerable tax; but they were at his death relieved from it. Jaddua the son of Jehonan, succeeded his father as high-priest of the Jews.

Towards

Towards the latter end of the reign of Artaxerxes, great disturbances arose in the Persian empire, occasioned by the contentions of his sons about the succession, for he had a numerous family. At length the poor old king, who was upwards of ninety-four years of age, died of grief.

Artaxerxes Ochus, one of his sons, succeeded to the throne. This monarch was the cruelest and worst of all the Persian kings.

The Sidonians and other Phœnicians revolted and entered into a confederacy with the king of Egypt, but Artaxerxes subdued them all. The Sidonians were betrayed into his hands by their own king, and finding there was no way to escape either by sea or land, they retired to their houses, and setting fire to them over their heads, were all consumed to the number of forty thousand men, besides women and children. Artaxerxes having no farther need of the king of Sidon, caused him to be put to death: there were vast riches in Sidon at the time of this calamity, which being all melted down by the flames, Artaxerxes sold the ashes for a considerable sum of money.

The Jews seem to have engaged with the Phœnicians against Artaxerxes; for after the destruction of Sidon he marched into Judea, besieged and took Jericho, and making many of the Jews captive, led them into Egypt and other parts.

Artaxerxes at length subdued all the revolted provinces, and then gave himself up to luxury and dissipation, and left the management of public affairs to ministers: after he had reigned twenty-one years, he was poisoned by Bagoas his favourite.

Upon the death of Artaxerxes Ochus, Arses the son of that monarch was made king by Bagoas, who put all the king's sons to death. The *name* of king was all that remained to Arses, for the power and authority Bagoas reserved to himself.

About this time PHILIP of Macedon was made commander in chief of all the Grecian cities and states, for carrying on a war against the Persians: but before he could set out on the expedition, he was slain at home by a young nobleman, whose injuries he had neglected to redress, and was succeeded by his son Alexander, who was then about twenty-one years old.

Artes king of Persia was slain by the treachery of Bagoas, who then placed on the throne Darius the Third, distinguished in history by the name of Darius Codomanus.

Bagoas not finding him such an one as would answer his purpose, resolved to poison him; but Darius being apprized of it, obliged him to drink the deadly potion himself, and became settled in the kingdom without any farther difficulty.

Darius Codomanus is said to have been the handsomest man in the Persian empire, very valiant, and of a mild and generous disposition; he was scarcely seated on the throne, before Alexander, king of Macedon, prepared to drive him from it.

The prophecy of Daniel contained in this section, respecting the conquest of Persia by the Greeks, gives one a lively image of the contest between the two kingdoms; one part of it evidently related to Alexander; we will therefore select it from the rest, as it will illustrate the following part of the history.

S E C T. CX.

THE HE-GOAT.

AND the he-goat had a notable horn between his eyes. And he came to the ram that had two horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran unto him in the fury of his power.

And

And I saw him come close unto the ram, and he was moved with choler against him, and smote the ram, and brake his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand. Therefore the he-goat waxed very great.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The notable horn certainly meant Alexander the Great, as the following account of him, extracted from authentic authors, will evince.

Alexander, shortly after his father's death, was declared general of the Greeks, and marched into Persia with an army, consisting of no more than thirty thousand foot, and four thousand horse, furnished only with a sum sufficient to subsist his army for thirty days. He encountered the Persian army at the river Granicus, and gained a great victory over them, though they were five times his number, and got possession of several provinces, and a great deal of treasure. After this, he defeated Darius with an army consisting of six hundred thousand men. Above one hundred thousand Persians were left dead in the field, and a great number trampled to death by their own party, as they were endeavouring to escape through a narrow pass.—In this battle, Darius was in great danger of losing his life, and his wife, children, and family, were taken captives.

After ALEXANDER had defeated Darius, he marched along the sea-coast towards Phœnicia: every place he came to yielded, but none more readily than Sidon. We have before related, that this city was miserably destroyed in the

reign of ARTAXERXES OCHUS; but it happened that some of its inhabitants were absent on merchandise and other occasions; these returned and rebuilt the city, but having an inveterate hatred to the Persians, gladly submitted to Alexander.

The whole of Syria and Phœnicia was now subdued by the Macedonians, excepting the city of Tyre, which being excellently situated for commerce, standing on an island, and having noble ports, was not so much a city belonging to any particular nation, as the common city of all nations, to which they sent their different commodities, and from whence they received the product of other lands.

The prophecies of Isaiah and Ezekiel concerning this kingdom, were partly fulfilled by Nebuchadnezzar, in the destruction of *Old Tyre*; but the new city rose to still greater power and grandeur than the other, and was in a very flourishing condition in the time of Alexander. Let us now see what these prophets predicted concerning it.

S E C T. CXI.

PROPHECIES OF ISAIAH AND EZEKIEL, CONCERNING THE TOTAL OVERTHROW OF TYRE BY THE GRECIANS.

I. **T**HE burden of Tyre. Howl, ye ships of Tarshish: for it is laid waste, so that there is no house, no entering in. From the land of Chittim it is revealed to them.

Be still, ye inhabitants of the isle, thou whom the merchants of Zidon, that pass over the sea, have replenished.

And

And by great waters the seed of Sihor, the harvest of the river, is her revenue; and she is a mart of nations.

Be thou ashamed, O Zidon: for the sea hath spoken, even the strength of the sea, saying, I travail not, nor bring forth children, neither do I nourish up young men, nor bring up virgins.

As at the report concerning Egypt, so shall they be sorely pained at the report of Tyre.

Pass ye over to Tarshish; howl, ye inhabitants of the isle.

Is this your joyous city, whose antiquity is of ancient days? her own feet shall carry her afar off to sojourn.

Who hath taken this counsel against Tyre the crowning city, whose merchants are princes, whose traffickers are the honourable of the earth? The LORD of hosts hath purposed it, to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth.

Pass through thy land as a river, O daughter of Tarshish: there is no more strength.

He stretched out his hand over the sea, he shook the kingdoms, the LORD hath given a commandment against the merchant city, to destroy the strong holds thereof.

And he said, Thou shalt no more rejoice, O thou oppressed virgin, daughter of Zidon: arise, pass over to Chittim: there also shalt thou have no rest.

Behold, the land of the Chaldeans ; this people was not till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness : they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof ; and he brought it to ruin.

Howl, ye ships of Tarshish : for your strength is laid waste.

And it shall come to pass, after the end of seventy years, that the LORD will visit Tyre, and she shall turn to her hire, and shall commit abomination with all the kingdoms of the world upon the face of the earth.

And her merchandize and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD : it shall not be treasured nor laid up ; for her merchandize shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing.

II. Thy rowers have brought thee into great waters : the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas.

Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war that are in thee, and in all thy company which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin.

The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots.

And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea shall come down from their ships they shall stand upon the land ; And shall cause their voice

voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly; and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes:

And they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart, and bitter wailing.

And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? When thy wares went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches and of thy merchandise.

In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depths of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shalt fall.

All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be fore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance.

The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

From the first of these predictions we understand, that it was foreknown to the ALMIGHTY, that Tyre would provoke divine justice to inflict another heavy judgment upon it, and that he ordained Chittim, which is Macedonia, to be the instrument of divine vengeance. The second extract describes

all the commercial and maritime world as grieved and astonished at her fate, and greatly alarmed for their own. Let us now enquire after Alexander's proceedings in respect to this kingdom.

S U P P L E M E N T.

The Tyrians, hearing of the rapid success of the Grecian conqueror, were desirous of securing the friendship of this mighty monarch, for which purpose they sent ambassadors to him with provisions for his army: but he insisted on their submitting to him as their master, on which they denied him admittance into their city: he then resolved to besiege it, and at length, with great skill and labour, accomplished the conquest of *old* Tyre, and afterwards burnt *new* Tyre to the ground, and destroyed or enslaved all its inhabitants. Eight thousand he slew, two thousand of those whom he took prisoners he caused to be crucified; the rest, to the number of thirty thousand, were sold for slaves. Some had, before the siege, sent their wives and children to Carthage for safety, and some were preserved by the Sidonians, who conveyed them away privately in ships. These were very heavy judgments, but from the prophetic writings we learn that they were deservedly inflicted; for the remembrance of the former misfortunes which had befallen Tyre, was obliterated by a series of prosperity, and the inhabitants once more regarded her as the *queen of cities*: pride, luxury, avarice, licentiousness, and impiety, again ruled their actions; they again confided in their own strength and power, forgetful of the ALMIGHTY, who had before humbled them in the dust.

The following extract from the prophecy of Ezekiel gives a lively idea of the magnificence and importance of this famous city.

S E C T.

S E C T. CXII.

PART OF THE PROPHECY OF EZEKIEL CONCERNING TYRE.

O THOU that art situate at the entry of the sea, which art a merchant of the people for many isles, Thus saith the LORD GOD ; O Tyrus, thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty.

Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty.

They have made all thy ship boards of fir trees of Senir : they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make masts for thee.

Of the oaks of Bashan have they made thine oars : the company of the Ashurites have made thy benches of ivory, brought out of the isles of Chittim.

Fine linen with brodered work from Egypt was that which thou spreadest forth to be thy sail ; blue and purple from the isles of Elisha was that which covered thee.

The inhabitants of Zidon and Arvad were thy mariners : thy wise men, O Tyrus, that were in thee, were thy pilots.

The ancients of Gebal and the wise men thereof were in thee thy calkers : all the ships of the sea with their mariners were in thee to occupy thy merchandise.

They of Persia, and of Lud, and of Phut were in thine army, thy men of war : they hanged the shield and helmet in thee ; they set forth thy comeliness.

The men of Arvad with thine army were upon thy walls round about, and the Gammadims were in thy towers : they hanged their shields upon thy walls round about : they have made thy beauty perfect.

Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches ; with silver, iron, tin, and lead they traded in thy fairs.

Javan, Tubal, and Meshech, they were thy merchants : they traded the persons of men and vessels of brass in thy market.

They of the house of Togarmah traded in thy fairs with horses, and horsemen, and mules.

The men of Dedan were thy merchants : many isles were the merchandise of thine hand : they brought thee for a present horns of ivory, and ebony.

Syria was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of the wares of thy making : they occupied in thy fairs with emeralds, purple, and brodered work, and fine linen, and coral, and agate.

Judah, and the land of Israel, they were thy merchants : they traded in thy market wheat of Minnith, and Pannag, and honey, and oil, and balm.

Damascus was thy merchant in the multitude of the wares of thy making, for the multitude of all riches ; in the wine of Helbon, and white wool.

Dan

Dan also and Javan going to and fro occupied in thy fairs: bright iron, cassia, and calamus were in thy market.

Dedan was thy merchant in precious clothes for chariots.

Arabia, and all the princes of Kedar, they occupied with thee in lambs, and rams, and goats: in these were they thy merchants.

The merchants of Sheba and Raamah, they were thy merchants: they occupied in thy fairs with chief of all spices, and with all precious stones, and gold.

Haran, and Canneh, and Eden, the merchants of Sheba, Asihur, and Chilmad were thy merchants.

These were thy merchants in all sorts of things, in blue clothes, and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar among thy merchandise.

The ships of Tarshish did sing of thee in thy market; and thou wast replenished and made very glorious in the midst of the seas.

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

What a strong resemblance does Great Britain bear to Tyre in many particulars. It is, like that, an island guarded by the ocean, and the acknowledged sovereign of the seas. Riches flow into her from every quarter of the globe, and the produce of her land is sought by distant nations. Her pride, like that of Tyre, has frequently provoked the LORD to send chastisements upon her; but hitherto she has not been totally abandoned

abandoned to infidelity and vice. Many righteous have been found in her borders, for whose sake the Almighty has graciously averted his heavy judgments. O may the number of these faithful servants encrease! May true religion flourish and abound! May the sabbaths of the LORD be properly observed! May the SAVIOUR of the world be duly honoured! May the *rich* exercise benevolence, and the *poor* act with integrity! May British youth of both sexes, and all conditions, impress upon their yet uncorrupted minds, this important precept, that RIGHTEOUSNESS EXALTETH A NATION, BUT SIN IS THE DESTRUCTION OF ANY PEOPLE; and may they regulate their lives accordingly! Then will the LORD not only spare our Tyre, but make us the GLORY OF NATIONS, A HOLY PEOPLE, and he will be near at hand to grant us all things necessary for our temporal and eternal welfare. Happy are the people who are in such a case, yea blessed are the people, who have the LORD for their God!

S U P P L E M E N T.

After Alexander had subdued Tyre, he marched to Jerusalem; the cause of his doing so was this. The Tyrians, being chiefly given to merchandise, were mostly supplied with provisions by their neighbours; and Galilee, Samaria, and Judea being the countries from whence they were principally furnished, Alexander, during the siege of Tyre, was obliged to apply to the same quarter, and therefore sent to require the inhabitants of those places to submit to him. The Jews pleaded their oath of allegiance to Darius, which forbade their acknowledging a new master during his life; this exceedingly enraged the proud conqueror, therefore he resolved to punish Jerusalem. In this distress Jaddua the high-priest, who had then the immediate government of the people under the Persians,

fians, being in great perplexity, resolved to *seek the LORD, and trust to his ALMIGHTY PROTECTION*. Sacrifices and prayers were therefore devoutly offered, and the LORD had compassion on his people; and directed Jaddua in the visions of the night to go out and meet the conqueror in his sacred robes, with all the priests in their proper habits, and the people in white garments, which they did; and advancing to a place called Sapha, (an eminence without Jerusalem) there waited the coming of Alexander, and on his approach met him in this solemn manner. He was struck with profound awe at the spectacle, and hastening forward, bowed down to Jaddua with a religious veneration, to the great surprize of those who attended him.

While all stood amazed, Parmenio, one of Alexander's generals, asked him how it came to pass, that he, whom all adored, should pay such adoration to the Jewish high-priest; to which he answered, that he did not pay that adoration to him, but to the GOD whose priest he was. For that when he was in Macedonia, and was deliberating how he should carry on the war against Persia, and was in much doubt about the undertaking, he saw in a dream this very man, who encouraged him to lay aside all fear and diffidence, and pass boldly into Asia; promising him that GOD would be his guide, and give him the empire of the Persians. Therefore he was now confident, he should succeed according to his desire; then turning to Jaddua, he kindly embraced him, and entered Jerusalem in a friendly manner, where he offered sacrifices to GOD in the Temple; and Jaddua having shewn him the prophecies of Daniel, which predicted the overthrow of the Persian empire by a Grecian king, he went from thence with greater assurance of success, not doubting but he was the person meant by those prophecies *.

This account is a farther confirmation of the opinion which is justified by several passages in holy writ, that the great con-

* See Dan. viii.

querors were by some means or other, made acquainted with the prophecies relating to themselves, and with the existence and supremacy of the LORD GOD.

The Samaritans, encouraged by Alexander's treatment of the Jews, met him also with great pomp, and prayed that he would honour their city and temple with his presence. He answered them kindly, but was not then at leisure, being on a hasty march into Egypt; and soon brought that country into subjection to him. Here he built a city, and called it after his own name, ALEXANDRIA, and afterwards peopled it with colonies drawn from other places; among whom were many Jews: to these he gave great privileges, and allowed them the free use of their religion.

When Alexander had settled all his affairs in Egypt, he hastened towards the east to find out Darius; in his return towards Palestine, he learnt that Andronicus, a great favourite of his, whom he had made governor of Syria and Palestine, had been murdered by the Samaritans; who, rising in a tumult, had set fire to the house in which he was, and burnt him to death, on account, as is supposed, of their not having the same privileges granted to them as their enemies the Jews had. Alexander being exceedingly exasperated against the Samaritans, caused all who had any part in the murder to be put to death, and drove all the rest out of the city, placing Macedonians in their stead, and giving the remainder of their territories to the Jews. Those who survived the calamity retired to Sechem, under mount Gerizim, and from that time this place became the *metropolis* of the Samaritan Sect.—Those Samaritans, who were in his army, Alexander sent to Egypt, to prevent disturbances, and then pursued his course in quest of other conquests. In a short space of time he got possession of the whole Persian empire.

Darius defended his kingdom to the utmost of his power, but was at last treacherously seized by two of his generals, and bound with chains of gold, and afterwards mortally wounded

wounded by them, and left in a covered chariot, where he expired before the arrival of Alexander; who lamented his unhappy fate, and bestowed an honourable funeral upon him, and treated his family with the utmost kindness. Thus died DARIUS CODOMANUS, and with him ended the Persian empire, after having existed two hundred and nineteen years, from the beginning of the reign of Cyrus.

At the time the Persians conquered Babylon, they were a sober, laborious, and modest people; but after they had completed their conquests, they degenerated from their natural character, and grew fond of magnificence, ease and pleasure; till at length they became like the Babylonians, and were regarded as the most luxurious people in the world; therefore, we cannot wonder that the Grecians were suffered to subdue them.

Darius was himself an amiable character, and we know not what good effects might be produced in his mind by misfortunes. The captivity of his family, proved the means of their preservation from death; and his sorrows might teach him to acknowledge the power of the SUPREME BEING, and to submit to his will. We read in the *New Testament*, that *if those who knew not the law, did by nature the things contained in the law, they were a law unto themselves*; whence we may conclude, I think, that those who have not enjoyed the advantages of Divine revelation, and are unavoidably ignorant of the scriptures, will be finally judged according as they have obeyed or disobeyed the dictates of their own consciences; for there is a natural sense of right and wrong implanted in every breast. Darius seems to have acted with uprightness and piety to the best of his knowledge, as many heathens did, and therefore we may hope they were partakers of divine mercy.

When

When Alexander had secured to himself the Persian empire, he resolved on the conquest of other nations; and after a variety of successes, which are related in the Grecian history, he took up his residence in Babylon. Here he employed his thoughts in plans for the embellishment of the city, and meditated future enterprizes; but met with obstacles at first, and died before the completion of his schemes. A supreme cause unknown to men overruled his actions, that the prophecies against Babylon, written 300 years before, might be accomplished.

Alexander intended to repair the temple of Belus, but God had ordained, that it should never be rebuilt. The Jews, who were among Alexander's army, refused to take their turn in clearing away the rubbish, though they were repeatedly punished; but at length the king, admiring their constancy, discharged them, and set them free.

What we have lately read, concerning the empire of the Persians, and the conquests of Alexander, is related in the works of Jewish and heathen writers. For the future we must have recourse to the antiquities of Josephus a learned Jew; and the *Apocryphal Books*, which are to be found in our larger bibles. The authors of these are not so well ascertained, as those of the books which are called *Canonical*, and therefore they are not admitted as *sacred*; but they are notwithstanding much esteemed; some, on account of the excellent moral precepts they contain; and others, for the credible relations they give of the history of the Jews. Among the latter, are the two books of the Maccabees, from the first of which the following section is extracted.

S E C T.

S E C T. CXIII.

DEATH OF ALEXANDER.

AND it happened, after that Alexander, son of Philip the Macedonian, who came out of the land of Chittim, had smitten Darius king of the Persians and Medes, that he reigned in his stead, the first over Greece; and made many wars, and won many strong holds, and slew the kings of the earth; and went through to the ends of the earth, and took spoils of many nations, insomuch that the earth was quiet before him: whereupon he was exalted, and his heart was lifted up.

And he gathered a mighty strong host, and ruled over countries, and nations, and kings, who became tributaries unto him.

And after these things he fell sick, and perceived that he should die.

Wherefore he called his servants, such as were honourable and had been brought up with him from his youth, and parted his kingdom among them, while he was yet alive.

So Alexander reigned twelve years, and then died.

And his servants bare rule every one in his place.

And after his death, they all put crowns upon themselves; so did their sons after them many years, and evils were multiplied in the earth.

ANNO-

ANNOTATIONS AND REFLECTIONS.

The foregoing account of Alexander's death, &c. is corroborated by heathen authors, who relate, that whilst Alexander continued in Babylon, he gave himself up to great excesses. He was for ever solemnizing new festivals, and perpetually at new banquets. After having spent a whole night in drinking, a second feast was proposed to him. He went accordingly, and there were twenty guests at table. He drank to the health of every person in company, and then pledged them severally. After this, calling for the cup of Hercules, which held six bottles, he poured it all down, drinking to one of the company, who pledged him again in the same furious bumper. Alexander had no sooner swallowed it, than he fell on the floor, *conquered by intemperance*. In this condition, he was seized with a fever, which very soon put an end to his life at the age of thirty-two years and eight months.

Alexander did not name his successor, as he knew there would be great disputes on the subject, for his children were too young to assert their claim, and he had no friend he could depend on as a guardian; he therefore, in his life time, gave the government of different provinces to his principal commanders. This filled them with aspiring views, and made them, when their great leader was removed, desirous of sovereign power; agreeable to Daniel's prediction concerning Alexander's kingdom, *That it should be rent asunder after his decease, and that it should not be transmitted in the usual way to his posterity**.

As soon as Alexander's death was known, there was a general lamentation, for he was greatly beloved and revered. His army in particular, abandoned themselves to immoderate grief. The state in which they were left, struck them with

* Dan. viii. 8.

consternation, for they had many evils to dread in consequence of his loss. The only way to prevent them, was by a speedy nomination of a new sovereign; but no effort of *human wisdom* could establish a *sole successor* to that prince, because the purposes for which Alexander was raised to such a pitch of power, were answered in the chastisement of the wicked nations he subdued; and the LORD knew that he would grow proud and arrogant, luxurious and impious, and therefore had ordained that his honour should not descend to his posterity.

After Alexander's death, Babylon gradually fell into decay, till at length the predictions of the prophets were exactly fulfilled, and the place where it stood is so completely occupied by wild beasts and serpents, that travellers tell us they dare not come near it; and thus we may be certain it will ever remain; for the Almighty has doomed it never to be inhabited.—What a warning does the fate of Babylon afford to wicked nations!

S U P P L E M E N T.

Alexander had an infant son, to whom he had given the name of Hercules. He had also a brother named Aridaeus, but he was young, and of a weak understanding. A variety of troubles and disputes arose amongst Alexander's chiefs; at length it was unanimously resolved that Aridaeus should be made king, or rather that he should be invested with the show of royalty. Perdicas, one of the chiefs to whom Alexander had given his ring in his last moments, had the person of the prince committed to his care, and remained at Babylon as regent of the kingdom. The name of Aridaeus was changed to Philip, and sometime afterward the son of Roxana (Alexander's

ander's queen) who was born after his father's death, was joined in the sovereignty with Philip. In the mean time the rest of the chiefs repaired to their several governments, and as soon as they were settled in their provinces, began to form confederacies and make war on one another, till in process of time all were destroyed except *Cassander*, *Lyfimachus*, *Ptolemy*, and *Seleucus*, and they divided the whole empire among them.

In this division **PTOLEMY**, whom the Greeks call **SOTER**, having taken possession of Egypt, resolved to make himself master also of **Cælo-Syria**, **Phœnicia**, and **Palestine**. **COELO-SYRIA** was a part of *Syria*; **PALESTINE** that country which was formerly the inheritance of the children of Israel; and **PHOENICIA**, the maritime parts of both. Ptolemy succeeded in his enterprizes against these provinces, but the Jews for some time, refused to yield to him, on account of the oath they had taken to the governor whom Ptolemy deposed; upon which he marched his forces into Judea, and having got possession of most of the country, laid siege to Jerusalem. This city was strong enough both by nature and art, to have made a long resistance; but Ptolemy came upon them on the Sabbath-day, when he knew they would not defend themselves, and took the place by storm. At first he treated the inhabitants with great rigour; but afterwards, considering how faithful they had been to their former governor, he employed them in his army and garrison, and granted them great privileges, upon which the whole nation of the Jews became subject to the king of Egypt.

HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER THE KINGS OF EGYPT.

Three years after the death of Alexander the Great, died Jaddua the high-priest of the Jews, who was succeeded by his son Onias. Onias died in the fifth year of the reign of Ptolemy

lemy Soter king of Egypt, and his son Simon, who, on account of the sanctity of his life, was called *Simon the just*, succeeded him. He continued in his office nine years, during which time he did many beneficial acts, both for church and state, but particularly in collecting together the books of the Old Testament. Those of Ezra, Esther, and the prophet Malachi, are supposed to have been added by him, to those before published by Ezra. Simon was the last of the Great Synagogue, which consisted of a succession of men who attended to the preservation of the accuracy of the scriptures, that they might not be corrupted; and it is by means of such persons as Simon, that we have had them transmitted to us.

Simon was succeeded by his brother Eleazar, for his son Onias was a minor when his father died. After the death of Simon, the Jews did not rigorously confine themselves to the doctrine of scripture, but *tradition* began to prevail; by which is meant, the sayings of the ancients, delivered down by word of mouth. Antigonus Socho, an eminent scribe in the law of God, president of the sanhedrim, or senate of the elders at Jerusalem, was the first teacher of this secondary law of tradition. Afterward (as we find in the New Testament) all the teachers or doctors of the Jewish law, were sometimes called scribes, and sometimes lawyers, or those who sat in Moses' seat.

Ptolemy Soter established a museum. This was a large edifice in the city of Alexandria, designed for the habitation of such learned men as made it their study to improve philosophy and all useful knowledge. This college produced a number of persons eminent for literature, and occasioned Alexandria to be regarded for many ages together, in all parts of the world, as the school of learning.

In this museum was a library, said to have consisted of four hundred thousand volumes; and there was another in a temple, which increased in time to three hundred thousand, agreeable

amounting in the whole to seven hundred thousand volumes. The greatest part of this famous library was accidentally burnt by one of the Roman emperors, and the rest, which had received a considerable addition, was at length, many years afterwards, destroyed by the Saracens.

Ptolemy Soter was succeeded in the throne by his son Ptolemy Philadelphus: this prince pursued his father's plan in respect to the museum, and hearing that the Jews had a famous book (what we now call the Old Testament) which well deserved a place in the collection, he sent to Eleazar the high-priest, to desire an authentic copy of it; and because it was wrote in a language he did not understand, requested that he would send a competent number of learned men, well versed both in Greek and Hebrew to translate it for him. This he complied with; and it is said, that seventy or seventy-two translators were employed to turn it into Greek; but whether so great a number were actually engaged in this work or not, is a question of dispute with the learned; however, their version of the law of Moses, with the translation of the prophets, which was afterwards made and added, is called from this circumstance, the *translation of the seventy*. I have told you in what manner the law was explained in Chaldee, by Ezra, after the return of the Jews from Babylon: and when, by their residence at Alexandria, the Greek was become most familiar to them, the scriptures were explained in that language; and from thence those Jews were called Hellenists, or Greekizing Jews, because they used the Greek language in their synagogues.

After the death of Ptolemy Philadelphus, Evergetus came to the crown of Egypt, and Onius succeeded his uncle Eleazar as high-priest.

Onius was the son of Simon the just, but in many respects the very reverse of his father: at the best he was a very weak and inconsiderate man.

When

When Ptolemy Evergetes died, his son Philopater succeeded to the throne. Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, (who descended from Seleucus) dispossessed the Egyptian king of several of his provinces, amongst which was Judea; but Philopater afterwards defeated the army of Antiochus, and recovered Cælo-Syria and Palestine.

Ptolemy visited the cities which he had regained by this victory, amongst which was Jerusalem. Here he took a view of the Temple, and presented costly gifts, and offered sacrifices to the *GOD of Israel*; but not being content with an outward view, he was desirous of entering into the SANCTUARY, nay, even into the MOST HOLY PLACE, which none but the priest (and that only on the day of expiation) was allowed to enter. This occasioned great confusion; the priests and Levites assembled to prevent the king's entrance, but all to no purpose. Philopater resolved to gratify his curiosity, and accordingly pressed on to the inner-court; but as he was passing farther to go into the Temple, he was seized with a sudden terror and consternation of mind, and carried out half dead. In a short time, he departed from the place, highly incensed with the whole nation of the Jews, and uttering many bitter threatenings against them.

Simon (the second of that name) the son of Onias, was high priest at this time; for his father dying towards the end of the former year, he succeeded him in the office. Onias had been extremely negligent during his administration, which the Samaritans taking advantage of, had been very vexatious to the Jews, by plundering and ravaging their country, carrying many of the inhabitants into captivity, and selling them for slaves.

No sooner was Ptolemy arrived at Alexandria, than he published a decree, excluding every one who did not sacrifice to his idol from having any access to him; degrading the Jews from the rights and privileges they had in the city, and order-

ing them all to be marked with the impression of an ivy-leaf with a red-hot iron, and as many as refused, to be put to death.

Nor did his rage end here, for he sent out orders, requiring his officers to bring all the Jews who lived any where in Egypt, in chains to Alexandria; and having shut them up in a large place without the city, called the Hippodrome, where the people used to assemble to see horse-races and other shews, he proposed the next day to make a spectacle of them, by having them destroyed by elephants; and to make these beasts more furious, they were intoxicated with wine mingled with frankincense; but the king the night before, having sat up late at a feast, overslept himself, which obliged the shew to be put off. He did so the next day; all this while the poor Jews continued shut up in the Hippodrome, where they ceased not with the most earnest supplications to implore the mercy of God, who graciously heard their prayer, and afforded them a wonderful deliverance. For on the third day, when the king was present, and the elephants let loose, instead of falling upon the Jews, they turned all their rage upon those who came to see the show, and killed numbers of them. This wonderful event so terrified the king, that he ordered all the Jews to be set at liberty, restored them to their former privileges, and among other favours, indulged them with the power of putting those to death who had apostatized from their religion; but of the many thousands of the Jewish race, who then dwelt at Alexandria, only three hundred had forsaken their God to gain the favour of the king.

Upon the death of Ptolemy Philopater, his son Ptolemy Epiphanes (a child of five years old) succeeded to the throne; but Antiochus the Great, king of Syria, taking advantage of the young king's inability to oppose him, marched into Cælo-Syria and Palestine, and in a very short time made himself master of them, and was chearfully received by the Jews;
in

in return for which, he granted them liberty to live according to their own *laws* and *religion*.

Shortly after this, Antiochus made peace with Ptolemy, and gave him his daughter Cleopatra to wife; and with her, as a dower, Cælo-Syria and Palestine, upon condition of dividing the revenues of those provinces with him.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER ANTIOCHUS, THE GREAT, AND SELEUCUS, KING OF SYRIA.

ANTIOCHUS was a prince of great humanity, clemency, and beneficence, and very just in the administration of his government; and till the fiftieth year of his life, managed all his affairs with valour, prudence, and application, which deservedly gained him the title of *the great*: but afterwards he declined in wisdom and conduct, till at length he was vanquished by the Romans, driven out of the best part of his dominions, forced to submit to very disgraceful terms of peace, and at last died in an inglorious manner: for, having robbed an idol temple, he was slain by the people of the country as he was carrying off the spoil. There is amongst the prophecies of Daniel * a very remarkable prediction respecting Antiochus the Great, but this cannot be explained without entering into an historical detail of this reign, too copious for our examination at present.

After the death of *Antiochus the Great*, his son Seleucus Philopater, succeeded him in the kingdom of Syria, to which he annexed Cælo-Syria, Palestine, and other adjacent provinces: it is not certain at what time, or by what means, he gained possession of them. At first he favoured the Jews, and supplied them with all things necessary for the service of the Temple at his own expence; but being informed by one Simon a Benjamite, who was governor of the Temple, and

* Dan. xi. 12 to 14 inclusive. See the Application in Rollin's Ancient History, and Prideaux's Connection.

had disagreed with the high-priest, that there were great riches in the Temple, he sent his treasurer, Heliodorus, to seize and bring them to Antioch. Heliodorus set out upon his journey; and when he arrived at Jerusalem, met with a most gracious reception from the high-priest: but as soon as he informed him that he came in the king's name to demand the money which they had in the treasury, the high-priest remonstrated with him, on the cruelty and injustice of seizing what was deposited in trust for the relief of widows and orphans. But this wicked man was deaf to every plea of humanity and justice, and insisted on obeying the king's command. "Wherefore, * (as the Book of Maccabees informs us) there was no small distress in the city; and the High Priest and people most earnestly intreated the aid of the LORD.

Heliodorus resolved to seize the money by violence; on which we are informed, he had a very extraordinary vision: this terrified him to such a degree "that† he was cast down and lay speechless, without any hope of life. But the high-priest fearing lest the king should conceive that some treachery had been used to Heliodorus by the Jews, offered a sacrifice for his health. So Heliodorus, after he had offered a sacrifice unto the LORD, and made great vows unto him that had saved his life, saluted Onias, and returned with his host to the king. Then testified he to all men, the works of the great GOD, which he had seen with his eyes." And when he returned to the king, informed him of the wonderful transaction, and assured him that the LORD certainly defended the place: then Simon slandered Onias to Seleucus, insinuating, that he had terrified Heliodorus; on which the good high-priest resolved to go to the king and vindicate himself. Not long after this, Heliodorus aspiring to the

* 2 Macc. iii. 14—23.

† 2 Macc. iii. 29—33. 35. 35.

crown, poisoned his sovereign Seleucus, in hopes of succeeding him; but his design was obstructed, and Antiochus Epiphanes, another son of *Antiochus the great*, was placed on the Syrian throne.

The Romans, by their conquests over *Antiochus the great*, had reduced the kingdom of Syria to a very low ebb, and had exacted the heavy tribute of a thousand talents annually. The prophet Daniel foretold, that after Antiochus, *should * stand up a raiser of taxes in the glory of the kingdom*. Seleucus was literally such, for his chief employment was to collect together, by taxing his subjects, money to pay the tribute to the Romans.

THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

Antiochus Epiphanes was a cruel enemy and persecutor of the Jews; his character, and the revolutions of his reign, were particularly predicted by the prophet Daniel †; but we have not room to insert this prophecy here.

After the death of Seleucus, ANTIOCHUS his brother, was returning from Rome, where he had lived as a hostage from the time the Romans granted peace to his father Antiochus the Great. Whilst on his journey, he heard of the death of Seleucus, and the attempt of Heliodorus to seize the crown, and that there were other parties forming. He applied himself to two neighbouring kings, Eumenes king of Pergamus, and Attalus his brother; and *by flattering speeches*, and great promises of friendship, prevailed on them to help him against Heliodorus, and by their means he was quietly seated on the throne; but they could not give him *the honours of the kingdom*, that is to say, *hereditary descent* or *free election*, as Seleucus left a son behind him, who was the lawful heir; neither was he the object of the people's choice.

* Dan. xi. 20.

Antiochus was a very *wile person*, and committed such inconsistent actions, that he was generally esteemed either a fool or a madman. He was very poor when he came to the crown, for his predecessor had been obliged to exhaust the public treasury to pay the tribute to the Romans.

JASON, who was brother to Onias, took advantage of the king's necessities to gratify his own ambitious views, therefore bribed Antiochus with a large sum of money to dispossess Onias, and make him high-priest in his stead. Jason, * who was an apostate himself, endeavoured to draw as many as he could from the observance of those laws and ceremonies which distinguished the Jews from all other nations in the world. He therefore obtained leave of the king to erect a place of public exercise for the training up of youth, according to the customs of the Greeks. These exercises naturally drew them from the service of the altar, and even the priests joined in forbidden customs with the heathens. Of course iniquity spread very fast, which provoked the LORD to recal his people to a sense of their duty, by severe chastisements.

CONTINUATION OF THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

There were every fifth year, games celebrated in Tyre in honour of Hercules, a heathen deity; and Antiochus being present at them, he sent several of the Jews who were of his party, to be spectators of them, and to offer for him a considerable sum; but the bearers being afraid of involving themselves in the guilt of idolatry, gave the money to the Tyrians to be employed in repairing their ships†.

Cleopatra, mother to PTOLEMY PHILOMETER, the young king of Egypt, had taken upon herself the government of the kingdom, and the tuition of her infant son, which she ma-

* 2 Macc. iv.

† Ibid.

naged with great care and prudence; but dying about this time, those who succeeded to the guardianship of the young prince, demanded of Antiochus the provinces of Cælo-Syria and Palestine, pleading Ptolemy's right to them; but Antiochus insisted on his right, and both parties resolved to decide the matter by war. Before either proceeded to hostilities, Philometer being fourteen years old, was declared of age, and therefore great preparation were made for his ascending the throne. On this occasion Apollonius, an ambassador, was sent under pretence of congratulating him in the name of Antiochus, who was his uncle, but in reality to see how the court stood affected. His report occasioned the king to take a view of the frontiers towards Egypt, and put them in a state of defence; and in this progress he came to Jerusalem, where he was received with great marks of respect, and proceeded from thence to Phœnicia.

Jason * continued in his office but a short time. He employed Menalaus his brother to carry his tribute to the Syrian court, who treacherously supplanted him, by offering to pay a larger sum annually; and obtained the king's mandate appointing him high-priest, with which he returned to Jerusalem, and put Jason to flight. Menalaus did not keep his engagement with Antiochus, and therefore was summoned to appear with the collector of the customs, before the king. When he departed from Jerusalem, he left his brother Lyfimachus as his deputy. In the mean time there was an insurrection in Syria, which called for the king's attention, and he went with an army to quell it, leaving Andronicus to govern in Antioch during his absence. Menalaus took this opportunity of stealing some vessels of gold out of the Temple of the LORD, some of which he carried to Antioch, instead of the tribute due from Jerusalem to Syria, and some he sold by way of merchandize to the Tyrians.

* 2 Macc. iv.

ONIAS * the good high-priest, whom Jason had circumvented, resided at this time at Antioch, and finding what Menalaus had done, reprov'd him for his wickedness, and then took refuge in a place of worship, where he thought he should be safe from the effects of his rage. But Menalaus prevailed on Andronicus to assist his cruel purposes, and by his means procured the death of Onias. Not only the Jews, but the surrounding nations, expressed grief and indignation for the murder of this worthy man; and even the savage heart of Antiochus felt compassion, and his eyes dropt tears of pity and regret for the good Onias, who by his sober and modest deportment had engaged the esteem and veneration of the very heathens. The anger of the king was kindled against Andronicus for abusing the power he had put into his hand, and as soon as he returned, he commanded him to be stripped of the robes of royalty with which he had been arrayed as his viceroy, and led through the city, to the very place where he had caused the impious murder to be committed; here he was put to death as his cruelty deserved.

In such a state of affairs, so pious a man as Onias could not have been happy in the high-priest's office; and we have reason to suppose, that the malice of his enemies proved the instrument of removing him from a state of grief and anxiety, to a world of everlasting happiness.

Antiochus having, ever since the return of Apollonius from the Egyptian court, been preparing for a war, he resolv'd to wait no longer, but instead of expecting it in his own territories, determin'd to carry it into those of the enemy. He therefore march'd his forces towards the frontiers of Egypt, where being met by the forces of Ptolemy, a battle ensued, in which Antiochus obtained the victory; and improv'd his advantage to the utmost, by fortifying that border of his dominions, and retir'd with his army to Tyre for the winter.

* 2 Macc. iv. 34.

Lyfimachus * had been assistant to Menalaus in robbing the Temple; therefore, as he was present in Jerusalem, the rage of the people for these sacrilegious acts fell upon him; which occasioned an insurrection in that city, wherein multitudes on the part of Lyfimachus were slain, and he himself perished.

Three delegates were sent from the Sanhedrim, or senate of the Jews, to complain of Menalaus, who obtained sentence against him; but Menalaus bribed Ptolemy Macron, the son of Dorymenes, to persuade the king to revoke it. Ptolemy Macron had formerly been governor of Cyprus for Ptolemy Philometer, but having been disgusted with the ministry on some account, he went over to Antiochus, and delivered the island of Cyprus into his hand; on which he was received among the number of his friends. Antiochus prepared in the winter for a second expedition into Egypt; he was so successful, that he could have destroyed the whole army, but stopped the slaughter his troops would have made; which so endeared him to the Egyptians, that all parts of the country submitted to him except Alexandria. Ptolemy Philometer was either taken, or voluntarily surrendered himself to Antiochus, who entertained him seemingly in a friendly manner, but with interested views. After this they had but one table, and lived together with apparent friendship, though each harboured secret jealousies, and deceived the other.

The prophet also predicted, *that Antiochus would pollute the SANCTUARY OF STRENGTH*. We will now see in what manner this was fulfilled.

A DREADFUL MASSACRE IN JERUSALEM.

A false † rumour was spread in Judea, that Antiochus was dead: Jason took advantage of this, and with the hope of reinstating himself in the high-priest's office, collected to-

* 2 Macc. iv. 44.

† Ibid v. 5.

gether a thousand men, and made an assault upon Jerusalem, and at length took the city : on which Menelaus fled into the castle. Jason slaughtered great numbers of his fellow citizens who resisted him, but was at last driven away, and fled into the land of the Ammonites ; but being detested by all men for his abominable practices, he was pursued from city to city, and at last perished in a strange country, " where he was cast out unburied, had none to mourn for him, no solemn funeral, nor sepulchre with his fathers."

Antiochus, hearing an imperfect account of this transaction, supposed that the Jews had revolted from his government ; he therefore, as we are told in the Books of the Maccabees, " after he had smitten Egypt, returned again, and went up against Israel and Jerusalem with a great multitude ; and * commanded his men of war not to spare such as they met, and to slay such as went up upon the houses ; and these cruel orders were executed. Yet Antiochus was not content with this, but presumed to go into the Temple ; and entered proudly into the Sanctuary, and took away the golden altar, and the candlestick of light, and all the vessels thereof ; and the table of the shew-bread, and the pouring vessel, and the vials, and the censers of gold, and the crowns, and the golden ornaments that were before the Temple, all which he pulled off. He took also the silver and the golden, and the precious vessels : also he took the hidden treasures which he found. And when he had taken all away, he went into his own land, having made a great massacre, and spoken very proudly. Therefore there was great mourning in Israel. So when Antiochus had carried out of the Temple a thousand and eight hundred talents, he departed in all haste into Antioch, thinking in his pride to make the land navigable, and the sea passable by foot : such was the haughtiness of his mind."

* 2 Macc. v. 12.

He then left governors to afflict the nation : in Jerusalem, Philip, a Phrygian, a man more barbarous than himself; and at Gerizim, Andronicus. Menelaus was continued high-priest, who was even worse than these, having a malicious mind against his countrymen the Jews.

The people of Alexandria, seeing Philometer in the hands of Antiochus, regarded him as lost to them; and therefore seated his younger brother, who had on this occasion the name of Ptolemy Evergetes the second, on the throne: he is chiefly known in history by that of Physcon. Antiochus, who had advice of what was transacting, under pretence of restoring the dethroned monarch, returned a third time to Egypt, and endeavoured to make himself absolute master of the kingdom. He made great progress in his attempt, and the young king, Ptolemy Physcon, assembled his council to concert proper measures, when they resolved to seek for a reconciliation with Antiochus, through the mediation of the Grecian ambassadors. They then made overtures of peace to Antiochus, who promised to make preparations for a solemn treaty. In this extremity, Ptolemy Physcon, and Cleopatra his sister, sent ambassadors, imploring the aid of the Romans, who agreed to protect them, and sent an embassy into Egypt. Ambassadors had also been from Rhodes to accommodate the difference; but Antiochus dissembled with them, and pretended great affection for Ptolemy Philometer; however, this prince began to see through his artifice, and sent to his brother, that he wished to come to an accommodation; which was completed by the mediation of Cleopatra, on condition that the two brothers should reign jointly; so Egypt was restored to its former tranquillity.

The instant that Antiochus heard that the brothers were reconciled, he resolved to employ his whole force against them, and proceeded to hostilities; but when the Roman ambassadors

arrived, he was stopt in his career, and was compelled to put an end to the war.

Antiochus, at his return from Egypt, exasperated to see himself forcibly dispossessed by the Romans of a crown which he looked upon already as his own, made the Jews, though they had not offended him in any manner, feel the whole weight of his wrath.

THE CRUEL PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS BY ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES.

In order to effect his barbarous purpose, Antiochus dispatched* Apollonius, the collector of his tribute, to Jerusalem, with a thousand men, who concealed his designs, and by plausible pretences gained the confidence of the people, who had no suspicion of their hostile intentions; but as soon as the sabbath-day arrived, Apollonius threw off the mask, and falling upon the Jews, whilst they were engaged in public worship, slew great multitudes; and when he had taken the spoils of the city, he set it on fire, and pulled down the houses and walls on every side: but took the women and children captives, and carried away the cattle. The Syrians then built a castle or fortress on a high hill in the city of David, over-against the Temple, to overlook and annoy them; and a garrison was placed in it, where they laid up the spoils of Jerusalem. "Thus† they shed innocent blood on every side of the sanctuary, and defiled it, insomuch that the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled because of them; whereupon the city was made an habitation of strangers, and became strange to those that were born in her, and her own children left her: her sanctuary was laid waste like a wilderness, her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into reproach,

* 1 Macc. i. 29.

† Ibid 37.

her honour into contempt. As had been her glory, so was her dishonour increased, and her excellency was turned into mourning."

Antiochus* next issued out a decree that all his dominions should be of one religion, chiefly designing to distress the Jews. He forbad all burnt offerings and sacrifices in the Temple of the God of Israel; commanded that the sabbaths should be profaned, the sanctuary polluted, unclean things eaten, and every means taken to make the people forget the law, and change the ordinances of the LORD; and whosoever would not conform to the king's command, was to be put to death.

In order that this edict might be punctually obeyed, Antiochus sent officers into all the provinces of his kingdom, to see it put in execution, and instruct the people in the ceremonies and customs to which they were to conform.

No people† seemed more eager to comply with the orders of the king than the Samaritans. They presented a petition to him, in which they declared themselves not to be Jews; and desired that the temple, built on mount Gerizim, might be dedicated to the Grecian Jupiter, which was accordingly done. And not only the Samaritans, but many Jews, some through fear and some through ambition, apostatized, and became persecutors of their brethren.

The officer whom Antiochus sent into Judea and Samaria to see his decree put in execution, was called Athenæus, a man advanced in years, and well acquainted with the ceremonies of the Grecian idolatry. The holy Temple of the LORD JEHOVAH‡, was by this profane wretch dedicated to Jupiter Olympus, whose image was erected on the Altar, in the inner court of the Temple; and just before the image they built another altar, on which they sacrificed to him. *Thus was the daily sacrifice taken away, and the ABOMINATION of DESOLATION placed in the SANCTUARY*, as the

* 1 Macc. i. 41.

† Josephus.

‡ 2 Macc. vi 2.

prophet

prophet had foretold. It was truly the *abomination* of *desolation*, for it was *abominable* to GOD, and to all his faithful people; and it was the occasion of such *desolation*, as strikes one with horror to read of. The Jews were also compelled to go in procession once a month, and carry branches of ivy in honour of Bacchus, the god of drunkenness; idol altars were erected in every city of Judah, and incense burnt on them. Wherever any books of the *law of Moses* were found, they were torn to-pieces and burnt; and on the day on which they first sacrificed to Jupiter on the *Altar of the LORD*, they caused the most horrid cruelties to be exercised on those who adhered to the Jewish religion. Two women in particular, who had circumcised their children, were led about the streets with their strangled babes hanging at their necks, and then thrown headlong from a high wall; others, who had hid themselves in a cave to keep the sabbath-day, were all burnt together.

When the prophet Daniel foretold this dreadful persecution, he also predicted, *that the people who knew their GOD, should be strong to do exploits, and that they should be holpen with little help*. And it pleased the LORD to send them deliverance by means of Mattathias, a priest, who dwelt in Modin: this pious person had five sons; Joannan, surnamed Caddis; Simon, called Thassi; Judas, called Maccabeus; Eleazar, called Avaran; and Jonathan, whose surname was Apphus.

THE HISTORY OF MATTATHIAS AND HIS SONS.

“ When Mattathias* saw the blasphemies that were committed in Judah and Jerusalem, he said, Wo is me, wherefore was I born to see this misery of my people, and of the holy city, and to dwell there, when it was delivered into the hand of the enemy, and the sanctuary into the hand of strangers?

* 1 Macc. ii. 6.

Her Temple is become as a man without glory. Her glorious vessels are carried away into captivity, her infants are slain in the streets, her young men with the sword of the enemy. What nation hath not had a part in her kingdom, and gotten of her spoils! and behold, our sanctuary, even our beauty, and our glory is laid waste, and the Gentiles have profaned it. To what end therefore shall we live any longer? Then Mattathias and his sons rent their clothes, and put on sackcloth, and mourned very sore."

How beautiful and pathetic was the lamentation of Mattathias for the miseries of Israel, and the desolation of the Holy City! Life was no longer valuable to him, now that the heathen were come into the LORD's inheritance, and had defiled the holy Temple; he therefore resolved to die, rather than to fall away from the religion of his fathers.

"When the king's officers arrived at Modin, they endeavoured to prevail on Mattathias by gentle persuasions, and promises of honours and rewards to comply with the king's commands. But Mattathias answered, and spake with a loud voice, Though all the nations that are under the king's dominion obey him, and fall away every one from the religion of their fathers, and give consent to his commandments: yet will I, and my sons, and my brethren walk in the covenant of our fathers. GOD forbid that we should forsake the law and the ordinances: we will not hearken to the king's words, to go from our religion, either on the right hand, or on the left."

Just* as he had declared this pious resolution, one of the Jewish priests advanced to sacrifice on the idol altar, which was erected in that city; on which Mattathias, fired with holy indignation for the honour of the LORD, slew him in the impious act; he killed also the king's commissioner who com-

* 1 Macc. ii. 15—23.

pelled men to sacrifice, and caused the altar to be pulled down. "Then Mattathias* cried throughout the city with a loud voice, saying, Whosoever is zealous of the law, and maintaineth the covenant, let him follow me. So he and his sons left all that they had in the city, and fled into the mountains; and they were followed by a great number of the Jews, who took their families and their cattle, and hid themselves in the wilderness."

When the king's army were informed of their flight, they resolved to pursue them, and attacked them on the sabbath-day. The Jews made no resistance, upon which a thousand of them were slain. Mattathias and his friends were greatly afflicted for the loss of them, and at first approved their zeal; but when Mattathias reflected, that they had no right to expect the particular interposition of Providence on the sabbath-day, any more than on any other day, without an express promise of assistance from the LORD, he concluded that the law did not require them to be inactive in their own defence; for this reason he decreed, that if the enemy assaulted them on the sabbath, they should in future endeavour to repel them. And this decree was afterwards ratified and confirmed, by the consent of all the priests and leaders, to be a rule in their following wars.

Whilst Mattathias† continued in the mountains, many of the Jews were encouraged to resort to him; amongst the rest came some of the *Assideans*. These were a sect amongst the Jews who were called *Chasidim*, or *the Pious*: they were not only zealous for *the law*, but of many other constitutions, traditions, and forms of mortification, beyond what the law required. Those who contented themselves with what was written in the law, were called *Zadichim*, or *the righteous*.

Mattathias and his friends went round about the towns and villages, pulled down the altars, circumcised the children,

* 1 Macc. ii. 27.

† 1 Macc. ii. 42.

put their enemies to flight, and recovered several copies of the Jewish law.

Antiochus being informed that his decrees were not so implicitly obeyed in Judea as in other nations, went thither in person to see them put in execution. He then exercised the most horrid cruelties over all such Jews as refused to abjure their religion, in order to force the rest by the dread of the like inhuman treatment, to comply with what was required of them. There is a very affecting account of some of these martyrdoms in the books of Maccabees.*

THE DEATH OF MATTATHIAS.

Shortly after these martyrdoms died the good Mattathias, his last words are so edifying, that we will not pass them over.

“ Now * when the time drew near that Mattathias should die, he said unto his sons, Now hath pride and rebuke gotten strength, and the time of destruction, and the wrath of indignation. Now therefore, my sons, be ye zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of our fathers. Call to remembrance what acts our fathers did in their time, so shall ye receive great honour, and an everlasting name. Was not Abraham found faithful in temptation, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness? Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment, and was made lord of Egypt. Phineas, our father, being zealous and fervent, obtained the covenant of an everlasting priest-hood. Joshua, for fulfilling the word, was made a judge in Israel. Caleb, for bearing witness before the congregation, received the heritage of the land. David, for being merciful, possessed the throne of an everlasting kingdom. Elias, for being zealous and fervent for the law, was taken up into heaven. Ananias, Azarias, and Mischael, by believing, were saved out of the flame. Daniel, for his innocency, was delivered from the mouth of the lions,

† 2 Macc. vi. vii.

* 1 Macc. ii. 49.

And

And thus consider ye throughout all ages, that none that put their trust in him, shall be overcome. Fear not then the words of a sinful man; for his glory shall be dung and worms. To-day he shall be lifted up, and to-morrow he shall not be found, because he is returned into his dust, and his thought is come to nothing. Wherefore, ye my sons, be valiant, and shew yourselves men in the behalf of the law, for by it you shall obtain glory. And behold, I know that your brother Simon is a man of counsel; give ear unto him alway: he shall be a father unto you. As for Judas Maccabeus, he hath been mighty, and strong, even from his youth up: let him be your captain, and fight the battle of the people. Take also unto you all those that observe the law, and avenge ye the wrong of your people. Recompense fully the heathen, and take heed to the commandments of the law. So he blessed them, and was gathered to his fathers. And he died in the hundred forty and sixth year, and his sons buried him in the sepulchre of his fathers, at Modin, and all Israel made great lamentation for him."

From this pious exhortation, we may learn the true use of SCRIPTURE HISTORY. We find, that Mattathias formed his own character, by studying the examples of holy men, which are recorded in the sacred volume. Let us imitate him in this particular, and our life will, like his, be honourable, and your death happy.

Well might Israel lament for the loss of such a protector! but Judas, whom he appointed general, inherited his father's magnanimous spirit, and performed many noble exploits, some of which we shall relate; but must first observe, that Antiochus went to a place called Daphne, in order to be present at the celebration of some games which he instituted; during the whole time, he behaved agreeably to the character given of him by Daniel, of a *vile or contemptible person*; and did so many mad actions, before an infinite number of spectators, that he became the laughing-stock of them all.

THE

THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS AND HIS
BRETHREN.

The book of the Maccabees informs us, that as soon as Mattathias was buried, Judas, his son, (called Maccabeus) rose up in his stead. “And * all his brethren helped him, and so did all they that held with his father, and they fought with chearfulness the battle of Israel. So he gat his people great honour, and put on a breast plate as a giant, and girt his warlike harness about him, and he made battles, protecting the host with his sword. In his acts he was like a lion, and like a lion’s whelp roaring for his prey. For he pursued the wicked, and fought them out, and burnt up those that vexed his people. Wherefore the wicked shrunk for fear of him, and all the workers of iniquity were troubled, because salvation prospered in his hand. He grieved also many kings, and made Jacob glad with his acts, and his memorial is blessed for ever. Moreover, he went through the cities of Judah, destroying the ungodly out of them, and turning away wrath from Israel. So that he was renowned unto the utmost part of the earth, and he received unto him such as were ready to perish.”

Antiochus † being exceedingly enraged at the success of Judas against his generals, assembled all the forces of the kingdom, commanding them to be in constant readiness, and promised each of them a year’s pay in advance; but this he could not perform, though he had acquired great wealth; for he had exhausted his treasures, by foolish expences and profuse presents to particular persons; in which he verified the prophet’s prediction, that he *should scatter the prey and spoil of riches*. Besides the difficulties to which the want of money reduced him, others arose, according to Daniel’s prophecy, from *the tidings which came to him out of the east and north*: for northward the king of Armenia rebelled against him, and

* 1 Macc. iii.

† 1 Macc. iii. 27.

Persia which lay eastward, discontinued to pay him tribute. In every part of his dominions all was confusion, owing to his new edict; by which the ancient customs of so many nations were abolished, and those of the Greeks established in their room.

In * this emergency, Antiochus resolved to go himself into Persia, and leave the care of his kingdom and infant son to Lyfias, a nobleman of the royal family; to whom he gave particular orders to root the Jews out of their land, and settle strangers in every quarter. As soon as Antiochus was gone, Lyfias with cruel diligence endeavoured to execute the king's orders; he called to his assistance Ptolemy Macron, Nicanor, and Gorgias, three mighty generals, whose forces, united to his own, composed an army of forty thousand foot and seven thousand horse, besides one thousand merchants, who attended with the expectation of buying Jewish prisoners, for slaves. Judas and his brethren resolved to make a vigorous defence, but their first care was to secure the aid of the LORD; they therefore assembled the whole congregation, and devoted the day to fasting and prayer. After this solemnity was ended, Judas marshalled them for battle, saying, "† Arm yourselves, and be valiant men, and see that ye be in readiness against the morning, that ye may fight with these nations that are assembled together against us, to destroy us and our sanctuary. For it is better for us to die in battle, than to behold the calamities of our people, and our sanctuary. Nevertheless, as the will of GOD is in heaven, so let him do:" on which they resolved to keep themselves in readiness. Judas hearing that Gorgias intended to attack them in the night, removed, and came with three thousand men, poorly armed, to the camp of the enemy, which was strong and well guarded. Then said Judas to his men,

* 1 Macc. iii. 31.

† 1 Macc. iii. 58, to the end.

" Fear

"Fear * ye not the multitude, neither be ye afraid of their assault. Remember how our fathers were delivered in the Red Sea, when Pharaoh pursued them with an army. Now therefore let us cry unto heaven, if peradventure the LORD will have mercy upon us, and remember the covenant of our fathers, and destroy this host before our face this day: that so all the heathen may know that there is one, who delivereth and saveth Israel." Animated by this pious speech, the men of Israel followed their valiant leader; and falling upon the heathens, made a great slaughter; and threw the camp into the utmost confusion; they afterwards put Gorgias and his party to flight, and then plundered the camp, and returned laden with rich spoil. The next day, which was the sabbath, they poured forth their gratitude to the LORD in humble praises and thanksgivings.

Judas and his followers, encouraged by their late success, and much increased in strength by the numbers who now joined them, resolved to oppose all who combined against them, and soon obtained a memorable victory over Timotheus and Bacchides, two of Antiochus's generals, who brought a great army against them, of which were slain twenty thousand men; and the Jews gained great riches, besides arms, and many necessaries for carrying on the war†.

Lyfias hearing of the bad success of the king's army in Judea, and of the losses they had sustained, was much embarrassed; but knowing that Antiochus was resolutely bent to destroy the Jews, he made great preparations for another expedition against them, and marched into Judea with an army of sixty thousand foot, and five thousand horse, resolving to extirpate all the inhabitants of the country.—

"When † Judas saw this mighty army encamped at Beth-

* 1 Macc. iv. 8—11.

† 2 Macc. viii. 30.

† 1 Macc. iv. 30.—34.

fura, he prayed, and said, Blessed art thou O SAVIOUR of Israel, who didst quell the violence of the mighty man by the hand of thy servant David, and gavest the host of strangers into the hands of Jonathan the son of Saul, and his armour-bearer, shut up this army in the hand of thy people Israel, and let them be confounded in their power and horsemen. Make them to be of no courage, and cause the boldness of their strength to fall away, and let them quake at their destruction. Cast them down with the sword of them that love thee, and let all those that know thy name, praise thee with thanksgiving." After this pious prayer they engaged with the enemy, though the whole army amounted to no more than ten thousand men; by the aid of the LORD they gained the victory, slew five thousand of the adversary, and put the rest to flight, Lyfias retired to Antioch, purposing to return with a still greater force. Judas and his company went up to mount Sion. "And * when they saw the Sanctuary desolate, and the altar profaned, and the gates burnt up, and shrubs growing in the courts, as in a forest, or in one of the mountains, yea, and the priests chambers pulled down: They then rent their clothes, and made great lamentation, and cast ashes upon their heads, and fell down flat to the ground upon their faces, and blew an alarm with the trumpets, and cried towards heaven." Judas then appointed persons to cleanse the sanctuary; they set all parts of Divine worship in order, and offered sacrifices according to the law. Thus was the Temple-worship restored exactly that day three years, on which it had been profaned by the heathens.

But though the Jews had recovered the Temple, they were greatly annoyed as they went thither to worship, by a garrison which Apollonius had built on mount Acra; Judas therefore fortified a part of mount Sion, to secure the priests and people from the frequent attacks of their enemies†.

* 1 Macc. iv. 38--41.

† Ibid. 60, 61.

Whilst these things were transacting, Antiochus was in Persia, levying the tribute; but he fled out of that country with dishonour; for, attempting to plunder a heathen temple, in which there were great riches, the people of the country assembled and drove him away: he was therefore ill-disposed to receive the news of the defeat of his generals in Judea. The author of the book of Maccabees* informs us, that this account made him in a manner frantic with rage and disappointment; but he resolved to hasten to Jerusalem, and threatened to make that city a grave for the Jews, where he would bury the whole nation. Whilst he was preparing to execute this horrid purpose, he was struck with an incurable disease in the midst of his journey, but he was determined that nothing should stop him; he therefore ordered the driver of his chariot to redouble his speed, by which the carriage was overturned, and Antiochus so miserably bruised, that he was obliged to be confined to his bed in a little town on the road. Here he was tormented with the most excruciating pains, and all the horrors of conscious wickedness, and in a short time died. Thus, according to the prediction of the prophet†, *as he was going forth with great fury, to destroy, and utterly to make away many, he came to his end with none to help him.*

How different was the latter end of the life of this tyrant, to that of the good Mattathias! we may here perceive the justice of GOD, taking exemplary vengeance on so notorious a sinner.

THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS, UNDER THE REIGN OF ANTIOCHUS EUPATOR.

Antiochus Epiphanes was succeeded by his son Antiochus; this prince was very young, and his father before his death recommended the care of him to one of his favourites, named

* 2 Macc. ix. † Dan. xi. 45.

Philip*, whom he also appointed regent of the kingdom, during his son's minority: but when Philip came to Antioch, he found his office filled by Lyfias, who, as soon as he heard of the king's death, took the young prince then under his tuition, and placed him on the throne, giving him the name of *Antiochus Eupator*. Philip finding himself too weak to contend with Lyfias, fled to Egypt; but was disappointed in his hopes of getting help from thence, as that kingdom was in the utmost confusion, occasioned by the disputes between Ptolemy Philometer, and his brother Physcon; who were of such opposite dispositions, that it was impossible harmony should long subsist between them. Philip, not meeting with success, returned into Syria, and seized upon Antioch. At this time, Ptolemy Macron†, from being an enemy to the Jews, became their friend, on which he was called traitor by the Syrians; and indeed deservedly, because he had treacherously delivered the island of Cyprus, of which he had been appointed governor, by Ptolemy Philometer, to Antiochus Epiphanes. Ptolemy Macron was deprived of his government, and Lyfias appointed in his room; when the former found he had not the means of living as he had been accustomed to do, he came to the desperate resolution of poisoning himself.

In the mean time Judas Maccabeus marched out with his forces, to chastise the neighbouring nations, who were confederated to cut off the Jews; and gained several memorable victories, particularly over the Edomites‡, who, with Gorgias, the Syrian general, in conjunction, opposed him with an

* Macc. vi. 14.

† 2 Macc. x. 13.

‡ The Idumea, or Edom, mentioned above, was a part of the land of Israel, formerly belonging to the inheritance of the tribes of Judah and Simeon, which the Edomites, who were driven out of their own country, had taken possession of during the Babylonian captivity. After their coming into this country, Hebron, which had formerly been the metropolis of Judah, became the metropolis of the Idumeans.

army consisting of twenty thousand men, who were all put to the sword. Judas had likewise great success against the Ammonites, who had exercised many cruelties towards the Jews; and also obtained a memorable victory over Timotheus *, who was governor in the land of the Ammonites, the same whom Judas so wonderfully defeated two years before. In this battle fell, of Timotheus's army, twenty thousand five hundred foot, and six hundred horsemen: Timotheus fled to Gazera, where he was slain; and Chereas, his brother, who was governor of the place; and Apollophanes, another leader of the army, shared the same fate.

The † heathen nations that lived about the land of Gilead hearing of their defeat, resolved to attempt the destruction of all the Jews in those parts. The ‡ inhabitants of Tyre, Sidon, Ptolemais and other places, determined at the same time to cut off the Jews of Galilee; but they all wrote to Judas for aid, and through the mercy of GOD were delivered from the dangers which threatened them. Judas §, by the advice of the Sanhedrim or great council, had divided his army into three parts, each consisting of eight thousand men; with the *first* he and his brother Jonathan relieved the Gileadites; and with the *second* Simon, another of his brothers, assisted the Galileans; and the *third* were left at Jerusalem, under the command of Joseph and Azarias, two principal leaders, for the defence of that city and the adjacent country. The two parties who went forth on expeditions, returned with honour and triumph; for they happily delivered many of their brethren who were shut up in prison in different cities, in order to be all massacred in one day; put the enemy to flight wherever they went, and slew an astonishing number of them. Simon || then collected together all those he had rescued from their foes, and carried them with him into the land of Judea; and they were so dis-

* 2 Macc. x. 24 † 1 Macc. v. 9. ‡ 1 Macc. v. 15.

§ 1 Macc. v. 16. || Ibid. 21.

perfed, as to repeople the places which had been defolated by Antiochus Epiphanes.

Joseph* and Azarias hearing of the noble exploits performed by Judas and Jonathan, were ambitious of fame; and therefore, contrary to the orders which had been given them by Judas at his departure, they led forth their forces, on an ill-projected expedition againft Jamnia, a fea port on the Mediterranean; but Gorgias falling upon their whole army, flew about two thoufand men. Thus this rash attempt ended in the confufion of thofe who undertook it; but Judas and his brethren were honoured and renowned in the fight of all Ifrael, and even amongft the heathens.

Demetrius the fon of Seleucus Philopater, hearing of the death of Antiochus Epiphanes, and the fucceffion of Eupator his fon to the throne of Syria, applied to the fenate for affiftance in regaining the kingdom of Syria, which properly belonged to him; but they, confulting the intereft of Rome, refolved to fupport the claim of Eupator, and fent three ambaffadors into Syria to fettle his affairs, and regulate them according to the articles of peace which had been made with his grandfather Antiochus the Great.

Lyfias† enraged at the great fuccefs of Judas and his brethren, collected an army, confifting of eighty thoufand men, with all the horfe of the kingdom, and eighty elephants, and marched with this great power to invade Judea. He began the war with the fiege of Bethfura; but Judas falling upon him, flew of his army eleven thoufand foot, and fixteen hundred horfemen, and put all the reft to flight; upon which Lyfias, grown weary of fo unprosperous a war, came to terms of peace with Judas; and Antiochus ratified the treaty, granting the Jews liberty to live every where according to their own laws. In this affair the ambaffadors from the Romans were very ferviceable to the Jews.

* 1 Macc. v. 56.

† 2 Macc. xi.

But this peace was not of long continuance; for those who governed in the neighbouring provinces, not being pleased with it, broke it as soon as Lysias was gone to Antioch, and took all opportunities of renewing their former hostilities against the Jews; but Judas overcame them, and they were soon obliged to sue for peace.

In the mean time Timotheus, having drawn all his forces together to the amount of one hundred and twenty thousand foot, and two thousand five hundred horse, pitched his camp at a place called Raphen, lying on the river Jabboc.

Here Judas found him with his numerous army, fell upon him, and having gained the victory, slew thirty thousand men. Timotheus * as he fled was taken prisoner; but on his promise to set at liberty many Jews who were captives in places under his command, he was released: a great part of the remainder of the vanquished army fled to Carnaim, where Judas continuing the pursuit, put numbers to the sword; and then gathering together all the race of Israel that were in the land of Gilead, he took them with him in his return to Judea, in order to do as Simon had done the year before. Shortly after he returned to Jerusalem; then he and all his company went up to the temple, and gave thanks to God for the great success which he had graciously given them; for they had not lost one man, notwithstanding the dangerous enterprizes they had been engaged in. This return was about the time of Pentecost. After this Judas obtained several other important victories.

At length Antiochus marched to Jerusalem, in order to besiege the sanctuary. The Jews made a valiant resistance, but at last were on the point of submitting, when they were most providentially relieved. For Lysias having received

* 2 Macc. xii. 24, 25.

an account that Philip, whom Antiochus Epiphanes had appointed guardian of his son was arrived, and had taken possession of Antioch, and there assumed the government of the Syrian empire *, found it necessary to make peace with the Jews, that he might be at liberty to return to Antioch ; and accordingly, peace being granted to them on very advantageous terms, and sworn to by Antiochus, he was admitted within the fortifications of the sanctuary ; but † when he saw how strong they were, he caused them, contrary to his treaty, to be demolished, and returned towards Syria.

Menelaus ‡ the high-priest, in expectation of recovering his office, and being made governor of Judea, attended this expedition, and was very officious against his own people ; but Lyfias, finding the war was so unprosperous, accused this wretch to the king, as the original author of it ; and he was condemned to be cast headlong into a tower of ashes, where he miserably perished. On || his death the office of high-priest was granted to Alcimus, a man altogether as wicked as Menelaus.

On the king's return to Antioch, Philip was driven thence and suppressed. It has been before mentioned, that ambassadors had been sent from Rome to regulate the affairs of Syria ; these ambassadors finding that the king had more ships and elephants than the treaty allowed, caused the supernumerary ships to be burnt, and the elephants to be slain. This measure occasioned great discontent amongst the people, and a man called Leptines, being particularly exasperated, murdered one of the ambassadors whilst he was bathing. An embassy was immediately dispatched to Rome to excuse the king, but the senate dismissed them with silent indignation.

* 1 Macc. vi. 57.

† Ibid. 62.

‡ 2 Macc. xiii. 3—8.

|| 2 Macc. xiv. 3.

Demetrius the son of Seleucus, availed himself of this opportunity, landed in Syria *, obtained the kingdom, and caused Antiochus to be put to death.

Alcimus, who had been appointed high-priest, was rejected by the Jews, because he had polluted † himself with conforming to the manners of the Greeks; he therefore assembled all the apostate Jews, and going at the head of them, addressed the new king for relief against Judas and his brethren, accusing them of slaying many of the king's friends, and driving others out of the country; and by this accusation, so prejudiced the king against them, that he sent Bacchides, governor of Mesopotamia into Judea with an army, and joined Alcimus in the commission with him, for making war upon the Jews. On their first arrival they proceeded with artifice, and pretended to come with peaceable intentions, but Judas and his brethren were aware of their treachery;—some of the Jews, however, were deceived by them, and were destroyed; amongst these were sixty of the Asideans, and several of the scribes or doctors of the law. After this Bacchides returned to the king, but Alcimus remained with a part of the forces, who drew many deserters to him, and much disturbed the state of Israel. This provoked Judas to take the field, in order to punish those who had revolted. Alcimus went again to the king, and having presented him with a crown of gold, and other gifts, renewed his complaints against Judas; which being seconded by some in the court who were enemies to the Jews, Demetrius was induced to send another army to subdue them, under Nicanor their old enemy; commanding him to cut off Judas, disperse his followers, and establish Alcimus in the high-priest's office.

* 2 Macc. xiv. 1, 2.

† 2 Macc. xiv. 3.

Nicanor was at first unwilling to make war on Judas, but being urged by the king, he at length pursued it with fury; and having spoken many blasphemous words against the Temple, and threatened to destroy it, and build a temple to Bacchus in the room of it, he was slain, and his army routed by Judas. After * this, the Jews took out the spoils, cut off Nicanor's head, and the impious hand which he had lifted against the holy Temple, and hanged them upon one of the towers of Jerusalem: they then kept a day of great rejoicing, which was afterwards observed as an annual festival.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE HISTORY OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

We must now begin to take a view of the Roman empire, which was described to Daniel in the remarkable vision we formerly read, under the image of a *fourth beast, dreadful, and strong exceedingly, which, with great iron teeth, devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet of it.* The history of the Romans shews, that this was a very just representation of their rapid and irresistible acquisition of power and dominion.

Judas † Maccabeus saw himself continually attacked by the whole force of the Syrians, and that they were so perfidious there was no relying on them in any treaty of peace. He had no aid to expect from the neighbouring nations, and the Romans were generally esteemed for justice and valour, and always ready to assist *weak* states against oppressive kings; he therefore resolved to seek an alliance with them.—But could the Jewish nation, which had hitherto been so wonderfully supported by an ALMIGHTY POWER, be reckoned amongst *weak* nations? It is true, their army was small in

* 2 Macc. xiv.

† 1 Macc. viii. 1.

number when compared with their enemies, and they were frequently assaulted, but GOD had hitherto enabled *four of them to chase an hundred, and an hundred to put ten thousand to flight*; he had animated their breasts with the courage of lions, and shielded them from the most furious attacks of their enemies; they had returned victorious from many battles, without the loss of a single man; and none had fallen but through their own rashness, folly, or disobedience to the Divine Law. What need then had Judas and the chosen people of the LORD to seek for protection from an heathen power? It was degrading their HEAVENLY KING in the sight of idol worshippers, to suppose that they stood in need of their assistance; and the *honour of the LORD* required, that those who thus distrusted him, should be taught, by chastisement, to repent of their want of confidence in his Almighty Power. For we must remember, that by the Israelites (as the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) GOD had promised to shew forth his glory, and convey the blessings of Redemption to all nations; therefore it was not *possible* for them to be cut off, whilst they kept those laws which were given to distinguish and separate them from heathens, and continued to put their trust in the power of the LORD: neither could they be considered as the peculiar people of GOD, or expect miraculous assistance any longer, than whilst they fulfilled the conditions of the covenant made with their forefathers. And we may observe, throughout the whole course of the Jewish history, that when this people entered into leagues with heathen powers, they were always unsuccessful.

Eupolemus * and Jason, the two ambassadors whom Judas sent to the Roman senate, met with a very gracious reception; and the Jews and Romans entered into a mutual engagement, to assist each other both by sea and land; so that Judas and his followers, instead of fighting only *for their own*

* 1 Macc. viii. 21.

lives and their laws, and the recovery of their inheritance, as they had hitherto done, were now bound to assist, if called upon, the ambitious designs of that people who meditated the subjection of the whole earth. Though sometimes one heathen nation, and sometimes another, were, (after the apostacy of the Israelites under their king) suffered to prevail, for the punishment of the wickedness of others; yet, it was not lawful for the *remnant* of GOD's people, (who were preserved for other purposes) to join with them, without an express command from GOD: their only business was, to live quietly under the government which had dominion over them; as long as they were allowed the free exercise of their religion, and the possession of their inheritance; to wait with patience for the Messiah; or in case they were persecuted on account of their faith, and compelled to worship idols, and driven from their land, they were to defend themselves by every means in their power, that was consistent with their duty to GOD; and to rely with perfect confidence on the aid of the LORD, who would certainly be unto them a *rock of defence against their enemies*, and render human alliances unnecessary. Judas therefore took a very improper step in courting the protection of the Romans; and it was attended with fatal consequences.

Demetrius * having received an account of the defeat and death of Nicanor, sent Bacchides, and Alcimus, a second time, who encamped before Jerusalem with an army of twenty thousand foot, and two thousand horse: Judas had no more than three thousand men with him to oppose them; and of these, all but eight hundred, terrified with the formidable appearance of the enemy, fled from the host. Personal courage this renowned general possessed to a great degree; but what was his *natural force*, assisted only by a small number, without the *shield and buckler of his salvation, and the sword of his excellency*? He was now left to fight his own battle, for

* 1 Macc. ix. 1.

the LORD withheld aid from this new ally of the Romans: confidence of victory no longer inspired the breast of Judas; he could not now say to his fearful troops, as on a former occasion, * *It is no hard matter for many to be shut up in the hands of a few, and with the GOD of heaven it is all one, to deliver with a great multitude, or a small company: for the victory of battle standeth not in the multitude of an host, but strength cometh from heaven.* Danger presented itself to his view in all its horrors, and “ he was troubled in mind, and sore dismayed;” but still solicitous for his country’s honour and his own fame, he resolved not to give his foes cause to triumph in his shameful flight, therefore exerted the utmost efforts of human skill, and with astonishing bravery supported the combat for some time, “ so that the earth shook with the noise of the armies on both sides;” but at length, overpowered by numbers, he fell at the feet of his adversaries! Thus died Judas Maccabeus, who, whilst he continued to rely entirely on the LORD, was *in himself a host*; and whose name struck terror into the minds of mighty warriors. He was, on the whole, a most amiable and worthy character; and though the DIVINE BEING punished his inconsiderate application to the Romans, by deserting him in the hour of danger (as he chastised his faithful servant Moses for striking the rock, by not suffering him to enter the promised land), I think we cannot doubt, but that, after death, GOD exalted him to that state of happiness allotted for the noble army of martyrs: as he had been, in so remarkable a manner, under Providence, the restorer and preserver of the divine law, and the deliverer and protector of his country.

There was a general lamentation throughout Israel, for the loss of this valiant commander; and he was honourably buried by his brothers, Simon and Jonathan, in the sepulchre of his father, at Modin, having governed Israel six years.

* 1 Macc. iii. 18 – 20.

THE HISTORY OF JONATHAN, THE BROTHER AND
SUCCESSOR OF JUDAS MACCABEUS.

After* the death of Judas, the people were greatly disheartened. Bacchides prevailed every where; a famine also increased their distress; which, I think we may judge from God's usual dealings with his people, was sent as a chastisement for their distrust of him, and desertion of their general. Many of the friends of Judas were put to death, or cruelly used by Bacchides, so that there was great affliction in Israel, "such as had not been since the times of the prophets;" they therefore resolved to appoint Jonathan, the brother of Judas, to be their prince and captain. Jonathan accordingly took the government, and collected forces together to resist the enemy; which Bacchides hearing, endeavoured to get him into his power; but Jonathan, and Simon his brother, fled with their company into the wilderness of Tekoa; and in order to secure their goods and baggage, sent them, under the conduct of John, another of Judas's brothers, to their friends the Nabatheans; but John was intercepted in his march by the Jambrians, a tribe of Arabs, who slew him, took the rest prisoners, and seized upon their effects. Not† long after this, Jonathan had an opportunity of revenging his brother's death, and obtained a great deal of spoil. He exerted himself as his brother Judas had done, for the protection of God's people, and the blessing of the LORD constantly attended him.

Alcimus‡, by the aid of Bacchides, had fully established himself in the high priest's office, and made several alterations for the corruption of the Jewish worship, and bringing it to resemble the superstition of the heathen; at last he gave or-

* 1 Macc. ix. 23.

† 1 Macc. ix. 35.

‡ Ibid. 54.

ders to pull down the wall which separated the Jews from the Gentile converts; but whilst it was doing, he was suddenly struck with the palsy, and died in great torment: after his decease, the land of Israel enjoyed peace for two years. Soon after the death of Alcimus, Demetrius, who had seized Syria, and slain Antiochus Eupator, was acknowledged king by the Romans.

Jonathan made use of the interval of peace, in restoring the government of the Jews, both in church and state, and repairing the walls and fortifications of Sion; this excited the envy of the adverse party, who formed a plot which might have proved fatal to him, but that DIVINE PROVIDENCE interposed in his preservation. He*, and his brother Simon, had afterwards great success against Bacchides; who, grown weary of war, and tired of those who had engaged him in it, put several of them to death, and concluded peace with Jonathan†.

Demetrius, after a few years, gave himself up entirely to luxury, and neglected public affairs; this disgusted his subjects, and they raised a conspiracy against him. Ptolemy Philometer had taken offence at some proceedings of Demetrius towards him, therefore by way of revenge set up an usurper, whose real name was Balas; but he pretending to be Alexander, the son of Antiochus Epiphanes, great numbers of people flocked to him. Demetrius ‡ collected his forces with all possible expedition, and Jonathan armed his troops. Both parties courted the friendship of Jonathan; but as Demetrius had been a bitter enemy to the Jews, Jonathan durst not confide in him: he therefore accepted Alexander's offers, and having the consent of all the Jews, assumed the high priest's office, and officiated at the feast of Tabernacles§. There had been a vacancy in the priesthood

* 1 Macc. ix. 58. † Ibid. 71. ‡ 1 Macc. x. 2.

§ 1 Macc. x. 21.

for seven years, from the death of Alcimus ; but from this time it continued for many years in the family of the Maccabees, called Asmoneans, from Asmoneus, the great grandfather of Mattathias. Whether the Maccabees were of the race of Josedek, is uncertain, but they were undoubtedly of the family of Aaron ; and as none appeared who had a better claim, Jonathan had a right to the office, especially as he was chosen with the consent of all the people.

The contending kings of Syria having taken the field, Demetrius was at length overpowered and slain *. Alexander, having by this victory secured the whole empire of Syria, sent to Ptolemy †, king of Egypt, desiring to have his daughter Cleopatra to wife, which he consented to, and the marriage was accordingly solemnized. Jonathan ‡ went by invitation to the wedding-feast, and was received by both kings with great respect, especially by Alexander ; who caused him to be clothed in purple, enrolled amongst the chief of his friends, and take place amongst the first princes of his kingdom ; he constituted him also general of his forces in Judea, and gave him a high office in his palace.

These extraordinary honours excited the envy of several persons, who brought accusations against Jonathan ; but the king rejected them all, and caused proclamation to be made, that no one should presume to speak evil of him, and Jonathan returned into Judea.

Alexander || having obtained quiet possession of the Syrian throne, abandoned himself to pleasure, ease, and luxury, and left the care of his affairs to a favourite, named Ammonius. On which Demetrius, the son of the late king, being now grown up to manhood, resolved to attempt the recovery of the crown, and was joined by Apollonius, the governor of Cælo-Syria. On this, Alexander took the field with his

* 1 Macc. x. 50. † 1 Macc. x. 51. ‡ Ibid. 59, 66.

|| Josephus's Antiquities.

army, and called for the assistance of his father-in-law Ptolemy.

Apollonius * having embraced the party of Demetrius, gathered a great army together, and encamped at Jamnia, from whence he sent a haughty message to Jonathan the high-priest, who immediately marched out of Jerusalem with ten thousand men, took Joppa, and defeated Apollonius's army with a great slaughter; and having set fire to several cities belonging to the enemy, returned to Jerusalem with their spoils. Alexander hearing of this victory gained in his interest, sent to Jonathan a buckle of gold, such as were only worn by the royal family, and gave him also the city of Accaron, and the territory belonging to it†.

Alexander having greatly offended Ptolemy Philometer king of Egypt, he persuaded the Syrians to restore the kingdom to Demetrius, the true heir; who was accordingly seated on the throne of his ancestors. Upon this revolution, Alexander wasted the country round Antioch with fire and sword; a battle ensued, and Alexander being vanquished, fled with only five hundred horse to Zabdiel, an Arabian prince with whom he had entrusted the care of his children; here he was treacherously slain.

Demetrius succeeding in Syria, in consequence of this victory, called himself *Nicator*, that is, the *conqueror*. At first he treated Jonathan very graciously, and established him in the high-priesthood, and granted him many privileges and immunities ||. Jonathan, in return, performed some great services for him; but Demetrius was of a very oppressive, unjust disposition, and behaved afterwards with shameful ingratitude, which alienated the Jews from his interest. He had also rendered himself hateful to the rest of his subjects,

* Supposed by Prideaux to have been governor of Cælo-Syria, and a former adherent to Demetrius.

† 1 Macc. x. 89. || 1 Macc. xi. 26.

who revolted from him in favour of young Antiochus, the son of Alexander, called Theos, or the Divine, who was placed upon the throne, and Demetrius driven away.

* Jonathan being justly provoked by the ingratitude of the late king, accepted of an invitation made him by the new monarch; on which he was confirmed in the high-priest's office, allowed to wear the purple and the golden buckle, and to have place among the king's chief friends, with many other privileges. Jonathan and his brother Simon assisted Antiochus against Demetrius, and also drove the heathen out of the fortrefs of Bethsura.

JONATHAN MAKETH A LEAGUE WITH THE ROMANS.

Jonathan †, on his return to Judea, finding all quiet, sent ambassadors to renew the league which the Romans had made with Judas Maccabeus; who were received by the senate with honour, and dismissed with satisfaction: and they had likewise orders, in their return from Rome, to address the Lacedæmonians as brethren of the Jews; and Jonathan wrote a letter, to assure them of their remembrance and intercession to God in their behalf. Jonathan very justly observed, in this letter, that "the Jews stood in no need of the friendship of other nations, having the holy books of scripture to comfort them, and help from heaven, to succour and deliver them from their enemies;" but his conduct in respect to making alliances with other nations, was inconsistent with these expressions of confidence in the LORD. The Lacedæmonians, as well as the Romans, were *heathens*, and as such at enmity with God.

During the absence of his ambassadors, Jonathan and his brother Simon suppressed, in different parts of the land of Judea, the adversaries of Antiochus; and at length obliged

* 1 Macc. xi. 58.

† Ibid. xii. 1.

the heathens to abandon the fortrefs of Acra, in Jerufalem, which they had fo long kept poffeffion of.

Tryphon*, the perfon who had been chiefly instrumental in eftablifhing Antiochus on the throne, with a view of affaffinating him, and gaining it for himfelf, threw off the mask; but defpairing of ever being able to perfuade Jonathan to join in his wicked plot, he refolved to deftroy him; and therefore marched towards Judea with a great army, in order to get him into his power: but Jonathan met him at Bethfan with forty thoufand men: this difconcerted Tryphon's fcheme; he therefore changed his meafures, and proceeded with flattery and difsimulation to confult him about their common intereft, and promifing to refign Ptolemais into his hands, prevailed with him to difmifs all his troops excepting three thoufand men; two thoufand of whom he inconfiderately fent into Galilee, and with the remainder went with Tryphon to Ptolemais, expecting to have the place delivered to him: but as foon as he and his company were got within the walls, the gates were fhut upon them, Jonathan made prifoner, and all his men put to the fword. Orders were then fent to deftroy thofe in Galilee alfo; but they having timely notice of the fate of their brethren, refolutely determined to defend themfelves; which the enemy perceiving, marched off; and the Jewifh troops returned fafely to Jerufalem, where great lamentations were made for the lofs of their governor.

The heathen nations, on the capture of Jonathan, renewed their hofilities againft the Jews; upon which Simon went up to the Temple, called the people together, and encouraged them by a noble fpeech which revived their drooping fpirits, and they immediately chofe him for their commander; and under his conduct and direktion, proceeded to the completion of the fortification which Jonathan had begun at Jerufalem†.

* 1 Macc. xii. 42.

† In Jonathan's days the Jews built a temple in Egypt.

On Tryphon's approach to invade the land, Simon led forth a great army against him; on which the former not daring to engage, he endeavoured to deceive Simon also, by pretending that he had seized Jonathan only because he owed a large sum of money to the king; promising to set him at liberty, if his brother would send the money, and Jonathan's two sons to be hostages for their father's fidelity. Simon perceived that this was mere artifice, but willing to do every thing in his power to save his brother's life, he complied with the terms. Shortly after this the treacherous Tryphon put Jonathan to death, and then returned to Antioch, and caused the young king to be assassinated, reporting that he died suddenly; then seizing the crown, declared himself king of Syria.

When Simon heard of his brother's death, he sent, and fetched his bones, and buried them in the family sepulchre at Modin, where he erected a very famous monument of white marble to his memory; near this he placed seven pyramids, two for his father and mother, five for his brothers, and one for himself, round which he built a stately portico.

Jonathan's character as a warrior, cuts a noble figure in the Jewish history; he likewise laboured for the prosperity of his country, and seems to have been a man of good morals; but it appears, that he was too fond of pomp and magnificence; for as high-priest of the Jews, he should have disdained the purple robe and the golden buckle, which so far from adding to his dignity, debased him. The sacred vestment that distinguished him as the minister of God, was the most honourable garment he could wear. He was certainly guilty of an error, as well as Judas Maccabeus, in courting the friendship of the Romans; for as they were a great and increasing empire, and the Jews at that time a small people, it appeared as if they thought *to strengthen themselves*

selves in their strength, and trust to the shadow of Rome * ; which was inconsiderately flying from the standard of the LORD JEHOVAH. If there had been prophets at this time, I make no doubt they would have been sent to reprove Jonathan; or had he properly attended to the written prophecies, and the histories of the kings of Israel and Judah, he would have discovered that he ought not *to love them that hated God* †, but at all events, to avoid mixing with heathens. Jonathan's situation, to be sure, was a very difficult one, and he was subject to human infirmities: GOD, who permitted him to be deceived to his destruction, is a GOD of infinite compassion: he alone, could judge of the motives of Jonathan's actions, and whatever faults were committed by him through mistake, or want of information, were certainly pardoned by the Divine goodness.

SIMON SENDETH AMBASSADORS TO THE ROMANS.

Tryphon having usurped the throne of Syria, sent a splendid embassy, with costly gifts to the Romans, in hopes they would acknowledge him king; but they eluded his expectations, by causing the name of Antiochus to be engraved on their present, as if it came from him. Simon ‡ likewise sent ambassadors, for the infatuation of sending to the Romans possessed his mind, as it had his brother's before him. They were honourably entertained; great concern was expressed for the death of Jonathan, and satisfaction for the successes of Simon. The former leagues were renewed, and being written on tables of brass, were sent to Jerusalem. Those also, with the Lacedæmonians, and other nations, were confirmed to the Jews.

All § the priests, elders, and people of the Jews, met together in a general assembly at Jerusalem, when it was

* Isa. xxx. 2.

† 2 Chron. xix. 2.

‡ 1 Macc. xiv. 20.

§ Ibid 35.

agreed,

agreed, by unanimous consent, to establish the high priesthood and supreme government of the nation on Simon and his descendants, by a public act, in which were recited, the good deeds which had been wrought by Simon and his family. A copy of this they caused to be engraven on tables of brass, and hung up in the sanctuary; the original was deposited in the treasury of the Temple, and from that time Simon took upon him the stile, state, and authority of prince, as well as high-priest. Desirous of being acknowledged as such by the Romans, he sent ambassadors to renew the league with them, and also a present of a golden shield, of the value of fifty thousand pounds of our money. Both the embassy and present were cordially received, and the senate caused letters to be written to the different states who were then dependent on them, styling the Jews their friends, and commanding that none should injure or molest them, nor harbour any fugitives or traitors of that nation.

Thus did the *people of GOD* submit to be *shielded* by the ROMANS, as if the *shield of the SALVATION of the LORD* had been insufficient for them!

Simon had ample cause to desert Tryphon, therefore sent ambassadors to treat for peace and alliance with Demetrius, presenting him with a golden crown, as a token of submission to his government. Demetrius readily granted a confirmation of the priesthood to Simon, with a release of all taxes, tolls and tributes; and an act of oblivion of all past hostilities, on condition of his joining with him against Tryphon. All this was cordially agreed to by the Jews, and Simon declared sovereign prince of the Jewish nation, and the land freed from all foreign tyranny.

Simon, finding his son John (afterwards called Hyrcanus) to be a very valiant man, made him general of all the forces in Judea, and sent him to live in Gazara, where his presence was most necessary.

Demetrius

Demetrius was taken prisoner in a war with the Parthians, and carried into Parthia, where he married the king's daughter, which so enraged his queen, that she sent to his brother Antiochus, who was in Crete, and offered to marry him, if he would join his interest with her against Tryphon. This offer he readily accepted. Before he landed, he sent a letter to Simon, offering to confirm all the privileges which the Jews at that time enjoyed, and to honour the Temple. Simon, as a proof of his friendly disposition, sent him men, arms, and money, to assist him in carrying on his war; but the perfidious king broke through all his promises, rejected his offers, and sent Athenobius, his friend, into Judea, as ambassador, to demand Joppa, and Gazara, and the fort at Jerusalem; or instead of them, a thousand talents of silver. These conditions were too unreasonable to be complied with; but to preserve peace, Simon offered to give an hundred talents. Athenobius, enraged at his refusal, made no reply, but hastened back, to report what he had heard and seen. He told the king, that Simon lived in a style of the utmost magnificence, and that he absolutely refused to comply with his demands. Antiochus now considered Simon as a rival, and was jealous of his power; he therefore resolved to humble him, and having made Cenebeus, one of his nobles, captain and governor of the sea-ports of Palestine, sent him with one part of his army against Simon, and with the other, he himself pursued Tryphon, who continued to fly from place to place, till at length he was overtaken and put to death.

Cenebeus in the mean time marched into Judea, and began to kill and plunder the Jews. Simon being informed of these hostilities, "called* for his two eldest sons, Judas and John, who with a chosen army marched to meet the adversary, and soon came in sight of the formidable host; an engagement followed, in which Cenebeus lost two thousand

* 1 Macc. xvi. 2, 3.

men, the rest fled to their strong-holds. The two brothers having driven the Syrians away, returned in triumph to Jerusalem.

Antiochus Sidetes, after vanquishing Tryphon, and destroying his faction, settled all things upon the same footing as they were before these disturbances began.

About * a year after the war with Antiochus, Simon making a circuit through the cities of Judah, to see that all things were properly regulated, came to Jericho, accompanied by his two sons, Mattathias and Judas. Ptolemy, the son of Abubus, who had married one of his daughters, was governor of the place, they therefore took up their residence with him; but he was a very wicked ambitious man, and had formed a scheme to get the government of Judea for himself: in order to accomplish this, he made a sumptuous entertainment, under the pretence of honouring his guests; but while they were rejoicing in his apparent hospitality, he caused them to be assassinated. Ptolemy made immediate application to the king of Syria, promising that he would deliver Judea into his hands, if he would furnish him with an army; he also sent to Gazara, and offered great rewards to those who would kill John, and dispatched others to take possession of Jerusalem. John was apprized of Ptolemy's proceedings, and put those to death who attempted to destroy him: he then hastened to secure the holy City and Temple, and used every measure to secure the safety and peace of the people. Ptolemy finding his plot defeated, fled to Philadelphia, till such time as the army from Antiochus should arrive; what became of him afterwards, is uncertain.

There were great lamentations in Judea, on account of the death of Simon, who was universally beloved; for he was a man of piety, bravery, honour, and humanity, and a great benefactor to his country.

His noble acts deservedly gained him the esteem of the people; but the advantages he procured for them would have

* 1 Macc. xvi. 14.

been more permanent, if he had not put them as he did, under the protection of the Romans; for having by the aid of the LORD once more recovered the land of Judah from subjection to earthly monarchs, *their * strength was to sit still*, and trust to the protection of their heavenly King; bending their whole attention to the preservation of their law, and the practice of moral virtues.

THE GOVERNMENT OF JOHN HYRCANUS.

Antiochus being informed of the death of Simon, besieged Judea, and the inhabitants were on the point of perishing with famine. Hyrcanus was therefore obliged to make a disadvantageous treaty; in a short time after, Antiochus and his whole army were cut off in one night by the Parthians, whose country they invaded. Demetrius then recovered the kingdom, but still persisting in his tyranny and vices, his subjects soon rebelled; Alexander Zabina pretending to be the son of Alexander Balas, laid claim to the crown, and defeated him, on which Demetrius fled to Ptolemais, where his wife Cleopatra then resided; but she ordered the gates to be shut against him, and he fell into the hands of his enemies, who first made him prisoner, and then put him to death. Zabina by this means ascended the throne, and reigned over one part of the kingdom, while Cleopatra governed the rest; but shortly after, Seleucus, who was the eldest son of Demetrius, by this queen, resumed the kingdom, and was slain by the cruel hands of his own mother, after he had reigned one year. Antiochus Grypus, his brother, a very young prince was then placed on the throne; he, with the assistance of Ptolemy Physcon, king of Egypt, vanquished Zabina, who shut himself up in Antioch; but the inhabitants being informed that he intended to steal a heathen idol for the sake of the gold, drove him away, and after wandering from place to place, he was at length put to death. Antiochus Grypus,

* Isa. xxx. 7.

being

being grown to years of maturity, began to take upon himself the authority, as well as name of king; this his mother would not submit to, she therefore prepared a cup of poison, and offered it to him, when he came in hot from hunting; but being apprized of her design he obliged her to drink it herself, and so put an end to the life of this wicked woman. Grypus having settled his affairs in peace and security reigned several years without any disturbance.

During these divisions, Hyrcanus shook off the Syrian yoke, greatly enlarged his dominions, and made himself wholly independent. He subdued Sechem, the chief seat of the sect of the Samaritans, and destroyed their Temple, which Sanballat had built. He also conquered the Idumeans, and obliged them all to embrace the Jewish religion; and from that time they were incorporated into the Jewish church, and at length lost the name of Idumeans or Edomites, and were called Jews.

Hyrcanus sent ambassadors to Rome, to renew the league which Simon his father had made with the senate, and at the same time to complain of the oppressive behaviour of the Syrian kings. Upon which the senate decreed, that all the places which had been taken from them should be restored, reparation made, and that the Syrian kings should have no right to march their armies through the Jewish territories. Ambassadors were sent from Rome, to see this decree put it execution.

The behaviour of the Romans, in this instance was very honourable, and any other nation might have gloried in their protection and interposition; but when we consider the Jews as the peculiar people of God, they sink in our esteem for thus humbling themselves to heathens.

Hyrcanus being much increased in power and riches, sent his two sons, Aristobulus and Antigonus, to besiege Samaria; which, after a vigorous siege they took, and entirely destroyed,

stroyed, and even caused trenches to be dug every way across it, so that it might never be rebuilt. This was not done out of hatred to the sect of the Samaritans, for none of them dwelt here, Alexander the Great having expelled them as we formerly read.

In acknowledgment of the friendship of the Romans, Hyrcanus sent the next year ambassadors with a golden cup and a shield of immense value, upon which they issued another decree to ratify and confirm the former.

After the conquest of Samaria, Hyrcanus became master of all Judea, Galilee, and several other places in the country round about, and was one of the greatest princes of the age in which he lived: none of the neighbouring princes dared to molest him; but the latter end of his reign was disturbed by internal commotions in his government, occasioned by disputes between the Pharisees and Sadducees, from which the Romans could not shield him.

Hyrcanus died the next year after these disturbances, and having had the administration of public affairs both in church and state for twenty-nine years, left the high-priesthood and sovereignty to his eldest son Judas Aristobulus.

John Hyrcanus was an excellent governor and commander, and Israel was in a very flourishing state during his administration; but still they were in *obscurity*, when considered as the *peculiar people of God*. They were indeed victorious and successful over their enemies, for the Lord was still merciful to them in remembrance of his promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and his faithful servant David, and therefore would not suffer the heathen to dispossess them; but his mercy was exercised only in the *ordinary* dispensations of providence, and therefore we cannot wonder that they were distressed in those instances, in which they could not have been relieved without a *miraculous* interposition in their favour.

In

In the reign of Hyrcanus, Jesus the son of Sirach, a Jew of Jerusalem, going into Egypt and settling there, translated out of Hebrew into Greek, for the use of the Hellenistical Jews, the book of Jesus his grandfather, which is the same we have in our Bibles under the title of *Ecclesiasticus*. The antients call it the *treasury of all virtue*, supposing it to contain maxims leading to every virtue. It was originally written in Hebrew, about the time that Onias, the second of that name, was high-priest at Jerusalem.

Hyrcanus left five sons: Aristobulus, Antigonus, and Alexander, were the three first; the name of the fourth is unknown, but the fifth we are told was called Absalom.

JUDAS ARISTOBULUS MADE PRINCE AND HIGH-PRIEST OF THE JEWS.

Aristobulus succeeded his father. He put a royal diadem on his head, and assumed the title of king; this he had no right to do, as he was not of the lineage of David: but he paid no regard to the nature of the Jewish constitution, for he was a man of a most imperious, ambitious, and cruel temper. He cast his own mother into prison, and starved her to death; and caused his favourite brother to be executed on an unjust suspicion; but no sooner was the last fact committed, than he severely repented, and his conscience felt the bitterest pangs of remorse for all his cruel deeds. He had for some time been afflicted with a distemper, which was now increased by the agitation of his spirits, and he expired in great agonies of body and horror of mind, having reigned only one year.

The royal diadem brought neither honour nor happiness to this miserable monarch, who must have been, from the time he first assumed it, a prey to the most tormenting passions, and totally unfit for the duties of the high-priesthood.

Whilst the people depended on the aid and protection of

GOD

GOD alone, the high-priest might govern in civil, as well as in sacred affairs, till it should please the LORD to raise them up a king of David's line; but they could have no right themselves to transfer the crown and title to another family, without a divine commission. The prophecies gave them reason to expect a *son of David* as a future king of the Jews; and though the nature of his kingdom was not at that time perfectly understood, yet it was their duty to wait and see what the LORD would bring forth; and as GOD "*had * removed the diadem, and taken off the crown from the house of Judah,*" those were *usurpers* who presumed to wear it, "*till HE should come whose right it was.*"

ALEXANDER JANÆUS MADE KING OF THE JEWS.

As soon as Aristobulus was dead, Salome, his widow, set at liberty his three brothers whom he had imprisoned; and Alexander the eldest, surnamed Janæus, took the kingdom. At this time the government of Syria was divided between Antiochus Grypus, and his brother Antiochus Cyzicenus, who harrassed each other with continual wars; of which advantage being taken by Tyre, Sidon, and other parts of the empire, they assumed their liberty, and tyrants took possession of them.

After Alexander had settled his affairs at home, he attacked some of these places, and dealt very deceitfully with Lathymus the heir to the crown of Egypt, who came to their assistance; on which a bloody battle ensued, wherein Alexander's army was totally defeated, and he lost thirty thousand men; and must have been entirely undone, had not Cleopatra, queen of Egypt, come to his assistance.

When Alexander returned to Jerusalem, he went at the feast of tabernacles, to officiate in the Temple as high-priest; where he had great indignity offered to him by the people,

* Ezek. xxi. 26.

who called him reproachful names, and pelted him with citrons. They were instigated to this by the Pharisees, who bore him an inveterate hatred. Enraged by these insults, Alexander took instant revenge, by killing six thousand of them: from this time he chose his guards out of the heathen nations, never daring to trust himself with Jews. At last there broke out a civil war between him and his people, which continued about six years, and occasioned the death of fifty thousand persons; a decisive battle was fought, and Alexander conquered them. He exercised the most horrid barbarities, by which he so terrified the whole party, that they gave him no farther disturbance.

After these civil wars were ended, he had contentions with neighbouring kings: but at the end of three years returned to Jerusalem, and was well received by his subjects: soon after this he died of a disease, which was at first brought on by excessive drinking.

THE REIGN OF ALEXANDRA QUEEN OF JUDEA.

Alexander, by his will, appointed that the supreme authority should descend to his royal consort Alexandra, who made her eldest son Hyrcanus high-priest, but the administration was entirely in the power of the Pharisees. They immediately revoked the decree which John Hyrcanus had made against their traditional constitutions, and put many of the Sadducees to death, by the queen's leave, for she dreaded a fresh civil war. The late king's friends seeing no end to these persecutions, went in a body with the queen's youngest son Aristobulus at their head, to remonstrate against these proceedings; requesting, that if they could have no other defence, they might be placed in the different garrisons of the kingdom, out of the reach of their enemies. To this the queen readily consented, for she heartily commiserated their case; but this

was the utmost she could do for them. The Jews were threatened with a powerful invasion by the king of Armenia, but sent ambassadors, who accommodated the difference.

In a short time after queen Alexandra fell sick and died, being then seventy-three years old. She was a princess of great wisdom and discretion, and if she had not inclined too much to the Pharisees, no exceptions could have been made to her government.

THE REIGN OF ARISTOBULUS KING OF JUDEA.

When Alexandra made Hyrcanus high-priest, she left Aristobulus, his younger brother, to lead a private life: this by no means suited his aspiring temper; as soon, therefore, as his mother was past all hopes of recovery, he used measures to obtain the supreme authority, and Hyrcanus was obliged to submit to him. He retired to live upon his private fortune, but was afterwards prevailed on, by one of his adherents, to attempt the recovery of the kingdom; and he sought the assistance of Aretas, king of Arabia, who supplied him with an army; which being joined by the Jews, Hyrcanus gained a complete victory.

In the mean time the Roman empire spread far and near. Pompey, a famous general, had lately reduced Syria to the form of a Roman province; and Scaurus, one of his lieutenants, being sent with an army as far as Damascus, Aristobulus gained him on his side by the payment of a large sum of money; Scaurus threatened Aretas with the Roman arms in case he did not retire, which obliged him to raise the siege and retreat.

Not long after Pompey himself came to Damascus, where he was attended by ambassadors from several nations, and among the rest from Hyrcanus and Aristobulus. Pompey ordered the brothers to appear before him; they accordingly

attended, and many Jews came also to remonstrate against both; alledging, that they had changed the old, and introduced a new form of government; desiring that they might not have a king, but that justice might be administered by the high-priest, agreeably to the law of God.

Pompey having heard all parties, saw the injustice of Aristobulus, but left the determination of the affair till he could go to Judea. Aristobulus immediately armed in his defence, and when Pompey arrived he found him shut up in a strong fortress. Pompey was not long before he marched against him, and laid siege to Jerusalem. Aristobulus then, by the promise of a large sum of money, prevailed on him to retire; but failing in the payment, exasperated Pompey, who marched forward, and was received into Jerusalem by Hyrcanus's party; here he met with resistance from the other faction, and there was great confusion in the city: in three months time Pompey prevailed, and put the principal incendiaries of the war to death.

Before he left Jerusalem, he, with several other chief officers, went into the Temple, and caused the most sacred parts of it, even the most holy place to be opened. He visited the treasuries also, but left them untouched; he thought it however adviseable to destroy the walls of Jerusalem, and though he restored Hyrcanus to the high-priesthood, yet he deprived him of all the new conquests of his predecessors, would not permit him to wear a diadem, and obliged him to pay an annual tribute to the Romans. Pompey had hitherto gained great honour, and met with wonderful success; but after this, he sunk in his character, and in his power, which is attributed by Jewish historians, to his profaning the sanctuary.

THE JEWISH GOVERNMENT CHANGED.

Alexander, the son of Aristobulus, attempted to recover the kingdom of Judea. Hyrcanus being too weak to take
the

the field against him, would have fortified Jerusalem by rebuilding the walls, but this his treaty with the Romans forbade; he was therefore obliged to send to them for forces, upon which Gabinius, who was then the Roman governor of Syria, came to his relief; Alexander submitted, Hyrcanus* was confirmed in the high-priesthood; but the civil administration was taken from the Sanhedrim, the land divided into five provinces, and courts of justice appointed over each of them; and from this time, instead of the Prince, the supreme authority was invested in the Nobles.

Gabinius was a very wicked man, and exercised great extortion and oppression; he was soon removed from his government, and sent into exile, where he lived in a state of poverty for some years.

Craffus succeeded him; he was very eager to acquire wealth, and hearing that there were great treasures in the Temple at Jerusalem, marched his army thither to seize them, and ransacked it of every thing he thought worth taking. He then made an unjust war against the king of Parthia, in which he was slain. It is said, that when the king of Parthia received the head of Craffus, he caused melted gold to be poured down his throat, by way of mockery for his greedy desire of riches.

Calphurnius Bibulus had Syria assigned to him, but nothing remarkable happened to the Jews during his government; he returned, just as the war was breaking out between Cæsar and Pompey.

It is very affecting, as well as interesting, to read the history of this contest, but it is foreign to our present subject; it is sufficient to say, that Pompey was slain, and Cæsar triumphant.

The Jews were very serviceable to Cæsar in Egypt, on which account he confirmed all the privileges that had been

* He was taken prisoner by Pompey, but made his escape.

456 ANTIPATER POISONED.

granted them in that country; and ordered a pillar to be erected, in which they were recorded with his decree in favour of them.

From Egypt, Cæsar passed into Syria; here he was addressed by Antigonus, the son of the late king Aristobulus, with complaints against Hyrcanus and Antipater; but Antipater, who was then with Cæsar, pleaded their cause so well, that Cæsar, instead of restoring Antigonus, made a decree that Hyrcanus should hold the office of high-priest, and the principality of Judea in perpetual succession, and that Antipater should be the procurator of Judea under him. This Antipater, who was a man of great wisdom and powerful interest, had two sons, Phasael and Herod; to the former, he gave the government of the country about Jerusalem; to the latter, that of Galilee. Phasael behaved himself well, but Herod was of a very violent temper.

Julius Cæsar returned to Rome after the death of Pompey, great honours were decreed him, but a conspiracy was formed against him, and he was treacherously murdered. He had lately given permission to Hyrcanus to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, and during his life the Jews were held in great honour and esteem by the Romans.

Antipater was poisoned at a banquet by Hyrcanus's butler, at the instigation of Malicus, who was next in power to him; his sons would have revenged his death, but that there was a treaty of marriage on foot between Herod and Mariamne, the high-priest's grand-daughter, which suited his ambitious views, as the Jews were greatly attached to the Asmonean family.

Antigonus, the son of Aristobulus, made another attempt to recover the kingdom; and so far succeeded, that Hyrcanus and Phasael were taken and put in chains, and Antigonus took possession of Jerusalem. Here he was besieged by Herod, assisted by a Roman army; the city held out several months

months with a great deal of resolution, but was at length obliged to surrender. Antigonus submitted, and was led in chains to Rome, and Herod took the kingdom; but not thinking himself secure whilst any of the royal family were alive, he prevailed on the Romans to put Antigonus to death as a common criminal. With him ended the sovereignty of the famous Asmonean family.

THE REIGN OF HEROD THE GREAT.

As Herod was obliged to make his way to the throne of Judea through a great deal of blood, so he found it necessary to establish himself in it by the same means, and he put numbers to death. Hyrcanus continued a prisoner at Seleucia, in Babylonia; but was at length set at liberty, and was allowed to reside at Babylon, at which place were many Jews, who treated him with the reverence and respect due to their high-priest, and the honour due to a king; but he longed to return to his native country. Herod was equally desirous to get him into his power, therefore invited him with flattering promises, and sent an embassy to solicit leave for him to return; which the Parthian monarch granted, and the unfortunate old prince was for some time treated by Herod with apparent kindness and respect.

During the wars which were carried on between Cæsar Octavius, and Marc Antony, (of which there is a full account in the Roman History) Herod continued a steadfast friend to Antony; but finding he was in a desperate situation, and that he would not hearken to his advice, Herod resolved to make his peace with Cæsar. He had reason to apprehend, that the conqueror would restore Hyrcanus, who had once reigned under the protection of the Romans; therefore, to prevent this, he caused him to be put to death, after he had passed the eightieth year of his life, under pretence of his holding a treasonable correspondence with the king of Arabia.

Josephus

Josephus tells us, that Hyrcanus was a man of eminent candour, justice, and moderation; but a lover of his ease, and so conscious to himself of his own insufficiency for the offices of publick administration, that he usually intrusted them to other hands, by which means Antipater and Herod made their fortunes.

Herod having obtained an audience of Cæsar, as he entered his presence, laid aside his diadem; he expressed himself with so much intrepidity, that Cæsar, pleased with his spirit, caused him to put on his diadem again, accepted of his friendship, and confirmed him in the kingdom of Judea; upon which he made very large and magnificent presents to Cæsar, and all his friends, and from that time had more of his favour than any other tributary prince of the Roman empire.

Pleased with his success, he returned to Judea; but on his arrival, found a damp to his joy in the troubles of his own family; which were repeated, till at length he caused his beloved wife Mariamne, to be put to death in the fury of jealousy. When Herod's rage was quenched with her blood, his love for her revived; and the consideration of what he had done, filled his mind with agonies of remorse. These he endeavoured to stifle with feasting and diversions, but all in vain; the idea of Mariamne was for ever present, and he was sometimes in a state of distraction. Soon after, a pestilence happened, which carried off great numbers: this was regarded as a judgment from God, for the queen's death. Herod, from this time was observed to act with more rigour and cruelty than he had ever done before, and so continued to do to the end of his life.

Cæsar Octavius, after the death of Marc Antony, returned to Rome in great triumph, and had the name of **AUGUSTUS** given to him; which signified something above human, sacred and venerable, and by this he was afterwards called.

Herod

Herod having cut off all the Asmonean family and party, thought himself secure in his kingdom; he therefore ventured to deviate in many things from the antient Jewish customs. He built two stately cities, one where Samaria formerly stood, called Sebaste; the other Cæsarea; on the latter he expended vast sums, and it became the safest and most convenient port in all the coast of Phœnicia: he also built a magnificent palace for himself, in which were two apartments; one in honour of Augustus, and the other of Agrippa, the emperor's chief favourite.

Herod having finished his buildings, and finding the people much offended because of the many breaches he had made upon their laws, in order to recover their good opinion, and make them some amends, formed a design for rebuilding the Temple, which by length of time (having now stood five hundred years) and injury from enemies, was in a very decayed and ruinous condition. In two years he got together all proper materials, when he pulled down the old Temple to the very foundation, to make room for the new one, which in nine years and a half was so far finished as to be fit for divine service; though to complete it, workmen were employed for many years afterwards. Thus did Herod, though he knew it not, make preparations for the reception of the *true King of the Jews*, whose presence was to *glorify* this Temple; which might still be called the *second*, because that was not taken away, nor suffered to lie waste, but only renewed and cleansed from the profanation of the heathen.

Whilst these things were doing in Judea, AUGUSTUS subdued all nations, and the temple of Janus was shut at Rome. In times of war, the custom was to have its gates open, but shut in peace; and it was now the fifth time since the building of that city, that it had been shut, which was in the twenty-sixth year of the reign of AUGUSTUS, and the thirty-third of HEROD'S, when a general peace prevailed for twelve years together all over the world.

During

During this period GOD sent into the world the PRINCE OF PEACE, the promised MESSIAH, whose life and doctrines are contained in the New Testament; before we begin to read that, it will be proper to peruse the following tables, which will assist the memory in the recollection of the principal revolutions which happened in the Jewish state.

T A B L E S.

T A B L E S.

I.

PATRIARCHS BEFORE
THE FLOOD.

ADAM,
SETH,
ENOS,
CAINAN,
MAHALEEL,
JARED,
ENOC,
METHUSALAH,
LAMECH,
NOAH.

II.

PATRIARCHS AFTER
THE FLOOD.

SHEM,
ARPHAXAD,
SALAH,
EBER,
PELEG,
REU,
SERUG,
NAHOR,
TERAH,
ABRAHAM,
ISAAC,
JACOB

III.

TRIBES OF ISRAEL.

REUBEN,
SIMEON,
LEVI,
JUDAH,
ISSACHAR,
ZEBULUN,
GAD,

ASHER,
DAN,
NAPHTALI,
BENJAMIN,
MANASSEH, } half tribes.
EPHRAIM,

IV.

JEWISH LAWGIVER,
AND FIRST HIGH-
PRIEST.

MOSES,
AARON.

V.

LEADER OF THE JEWS
AFTER THE DEATH
OF MOSES.

JOSHUA.

VI.

JUDGES OCCASIONAL-
LY RAISED UP TO
DELIVER ISRAEL
FROM THEIR OP-
PRESSORS.

OTHNIEL,
EHUD,
SHAMGAR,
DEBORAH and BARAK,
GIDEON,
JEPHTHAH,
SAMSON,
ELI, also high priest,
SAMUEL, a great prophet.

VII.

KINGS OF ALL ISRAEL.

SAUL,

DAVID,

DAVID,
SOLOMON.

After the death of the latter the tribes revolted, and formed two separate kingdoms.

VIII.

KINGS OF ISRAEL.

	Reigned.	
1 JEROBOAM	17	} days
2 NADAB	2	
3 BAASHA	24	
4 ELAH	2	
5 ZIMRI	7	} years
6 OMRI	12	
7 AHAB	22	
8 AHAZAIAH	2	
9 JORAM	12	} years
10 JEHU	28	
11 JEHOAHAZ	17	
12 JOASH	16	
13 JEROBOAM II.	41	} years
An interregnum of	11	
14 ZECHARIAH	6	
15 SHALLUM	1	
16 MENAHEM	10	} years
17 PEKAIAH	2	
18 PEKAH	20	
An anarchy	9	
19 HOSHEA	2	

In the reign of the last king, the ten tribes, of which the kingdom of Israel consisted, were taken by the Assyrians, and carried away captive. The kingdom of Judah, composed of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, the Levites, and such remnants of the ten tribes

as escaped the captivity, still subsisted, under the government of the following monarchs from the death of Solomon.

IX.

KINGS OF JUDAH.

	Reigned.	
1 REHOBOAM	17	} years
2 ABIJAH	3	
3 ASA	41	
4 JEHOASHAPHAT	25	
5 JORAM	8	} years
6 AHAZIAH	1	
7 ATHALIAH	6	
8 JOASH	40	
9 AMAZIAH	29	} years
10 UZZIAH	52	
11 JOTHAM	16	
12 AHAZ	16	
13 HEZEKIAH	29	} years
14 MANASSEH	55	
15 AMON	2	
16 JOSIAH	31	
17 JEHOAHAZ	3 mon.	} years
18 JEHOIACHIM	11 years.	
19 JEHOIACHIN	3 mon.	
20 ZEDEKIAH	11 years.	

In the reign of the last king, the kingdom of Judah was subdued by Nebuchadnezzar, and carried away captive into Babylon.

X.

KINGS WHO OPPRESSED ISRAEL AND JUDAH BEFORE THEIR CAPTIVITY.

PUL, king of Assyria, whose kingdom was afterwards divided

divided into three parts,
viz. Assyria, Babylon, and
Media.

KINGS OF ASSYRIA.

TIGLATH-PILESER,
SHALMANESER,
SENNACHERIB,
ESSAR-HADDON.

The ten tribes were subdued by Sennacherib, and carried away into a strange land by Essar-haddon his son. Several kings succeeded these, but we read nothing of them in scripture till the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, who led the king and people of Judah into captivity, and also conquered Assyria, which was then added to the Babylonian empire.

XI.

PROPHETS.

JONAH,
AMOS,
HOSEA,
ISAIAH,
MICAH,
NAHUM,
HABBAKUK,
ZEPHANIAH,
JOEL,
JEREMIAH.

These were sent during the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel, to warn them and the people to depart from their sins, and to promise blessings to the faithful.

JEREMIAH continued.

DANIEL,
EZEKIEL,
OBADIAH,
HAGGAI,

ZECHARIAH, } he returned
 } from the
 } captivity.
MALACHI, } the last of the
 } prophets.

These prophesied after the Jews were carried into captivity, till prophecy ceased. They comforted the people during their absence from their own land, and foretold their return, and the fate of various nations, also a great deliverance by the Messiah.

XII.

KINGS OF BABYLON AND ASSYRIA, TO WHOM THE ISRAEL- ITES WERE IN SUB- JECTION.

NEBUCHADNEZZAR,
EVIL-MERODACH,
LABOROSOARCHOD,
NERIGLISSAR,
BELSHAZZAR

This last king was subdued by Cyrus, king of Persia, who put an end to the Assyrian monarchy, and founded the Persian. He permitted the Jews to return to their own land, and be governed by their own law, but they were still dependant on Persia.

XIII.

XIII.

KINGS OF PERSIA, TO
WHOM THE ISRAE-
LITES WERE IN SUB-
JECTION AFTER THE
DEATH OF CYRUS.

CAMBYSES,
SMERDIS MAGUS,
DARIUS HYSTASPES,
XERXES I.
ARTAXERXES LONGIMA-
NUS,
SOGDIANUS,
DARIUS NOTHUS,
ARTAXERXES MNEMON,
ARTAXERXES OCHUS,
ARSES,
DARIUS CODOMANUS.

This last king was van-
quished by Alexander the
Great, who put an end to
the Persian monarchy, on the
ruin of which arose the Gre-
cian empire. After the
death of Alexander, this
empire was divided into four
kingdoms, Egypt, Syria,
Asia, Macedon.

XIV.

KINGS OF EGYPT, TO
WHOM THE JEWS
WERE IN SUBJEC-
TION IN CONSE-
QUENCE OF THE DI-
VISION OF ALEXAN-
DER'S KINGDOM.

PTOLEMY SOTER,
PTOLEMY PHILADELPHUS,
PTOLEMY EVERGETES,

PTOLEMY EPIPHANES,
PTOLEMY PHILOMETER.

During the reign of the
last king, the land of Judea
was annexed to the kingdom
of Syria.

XV.

KINGS OF SYRIA TO
WHOM THE JEWS
WERE IN SUBJEC-
TION.

ANTIOCHUS the Great,
ANTIOCHUS EPIPHANES,
ANTIOCHUS EUPATER,
DEMETRIUS SOTER.

In the reign of this king the
Jews made a league with the
Romans.

ALEXANDER BELUS,
DEMETRIUS NICANOR,
ANTIOCHUS THEUS,
TRYPHON,
ANTIOCHUS SIDETES,
DEMETRIUS NICANOR
restored.

In the reign of this king
John Hyrcanus shook off the
Syrian yoke.

XVI.

ROMAN TRIUMVIRS ON
WHOM THE JEWS
WERE DEPENDENT.

POMPEY the Great,
JULIUS CÆSAR, afterwards
emperor,
MARC ANTONY,
OCTAVIANUS, called after-
wards AUGUSTUS CÆSAR,
Emperor.

XVII.

XVII.

ROMAN GOVERNORS
OF SYRIA, WHO OP-
PRESSED THE JEWS
UNDER THE TRIUM-
VIRS.

GABINIUS,
CRASSUS.

The first set up a new form
of government in Judea.—
The latter plundered the
Temple at Jerusalem.

XVIII.

HIGH PRIESTS OF JU-
DAH AFTER THE RE-
TURN FROM THE BA-
BYLONISH CAPTIVI-
TY.

JESHUA,
JOIAKIM.
ELIASHIB,
JOIADAH,
JOHANAN,
JADDUA,
ONIAS I.
SIMON THE JUST,
ELEAZAR,
MANASSEH,
ONIAS II.
SIMON II.
ONIAS III.
JASON,
MENELAUS,
ALCIMUS,

XIX.

PRINCES OF JUDAH,

Raised up by GOD, and
miraculously assisted to
protect the people from
the cruel persecution
of Antiochus Epipha-
nes, and other tyrants,
who attempted to dispossess
them of their land, to
which divine goodness had
restored them.

MATTATHIAS,
JUDAS MACCABEUS,
JONATHAN,
SIMON,
JOHN HYRCANUS.

XX.

KINGS OF JUDAH,

Who, forgetful that the LORD
had given the inheritance
to David and his seed *for*
ever, usurped the title,
and reduced their country
to a level with heathen na-
tions.

ARISTOBULUS,
ALEXANDER JANÆUS.
ALEXANDRA,
ARISTOBULUS II.
HYRCANUS II.
ANTIGONUS,
HEROD.

END OF THE FOURTH VOLUME.

